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# Lenin

AND  
THE PEASANTRY







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## AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

The last quarter of the 19th century was a difficult period in the life of Russia. Under the reform of 1861 the landlords in some provinces took possession of up to 50 per cent of the land allotted to the peasants who had to buy it back at two or three times its market value, i.e. they had to pay tribute to the landlords for their "emancipation." High taxes were exacted from them for the maintenance of the army, police, officials and the tsar's court. All this gave rise to the bitter saying: "One man with a plough, and seven ready with their spoons."

During the first decades after the reform the emerging Russian bourgeoisie bought large tracts of land at three roubles a *dessiatina* (= 2.7 acres) from the poor peasants and were able to establish large farms.

The impoverished peasant's tiny allotment was too small to provide subsistence for his family and he was forced to rent one or two *dessiatinas* from his *barin* (landowner). As a rule, this was leased on the metayage system, i.e. the peasant had to pay half of the yield to the landowner. One-third of the peasants did not own a horse. Very many rural inhabitants left

their old homes and went to the towns to get seasonal work.

Creatively developing Marxism, Lenin deeply analysed the socio-economic relations in Russia, proved the objective necessity and real possibility of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasants, and revealed its role and importance at different stages of the revolution and building of a new life.

He proved scientifically that capitalism had reached a certain development in Russia and would be destroyed only by the working class led by a Marxist party. He showed that the factory workers were the advanced representatives of the whole exploited population of the country including the peasants. Their living and working conditions encouraged the organisation of an industrial proletariat which could undertake political struggle. The working class could join battle with tsarism alongside and at the head of the peasants and all oppressed people. This idea illumined Lenin's entire activity, his every step. It found reflection in the agrarian programme of the party Lenin created. In this programme, the agrarian problem is examined in close relationship with the political tasks of the Marxist party of the proletariat, as an integral part of the party's national struggle against tsarism, the landlords and the capitalists. All the demands put forward by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the agrarian programme were at that time directed at eliminating the survivals of serfdom, developing class struggle in the countryside and winning democratic freedom.

The great majority of peasants were not of the exploiting class and were subjected to unprecedented oppression by the landlords and capitalists. The peasants hoped that the imminent bourgeois-democratic revolution would do away with landed proprietorship, transfer all land to

the peasants and eradicate all traces of serfdom. The community of economic and political interests of the workers and peasants in their struggle against tsarism and the remnants of serfdom created the necessary prerequisites for a strong alliance, with the leading role being taken by the working class.

The agrarian problem in Russia was the basis for the bourgeois-democratic revolution, its cornerstone and constituted its national peculiarity. As early as 1899 Lenin pointed out in "A Draft Programme for Our Party" that the peasantry were no longer a single entity and that therefore it was necessary to isolate oneself completely from all efforts, so apparent in Russia, to smooth over the class struggle in the countryside. He advocated this idea even more strongly in "The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy" (1902). "We hold," he wrote, "that the class struggle is the main factor also in the sphere of agrarian relationships in Russia. We base our entire agrarian policy (and, consequently, our agrarian programme as well) on unswerving recognition of this fact along with all consequences resulting from it."<sup>1</sup>)

The demands of Lenin's agrarian programme gave the peasant movement clarity of purpose and were aimed at carrying through a democratic upheaval in agrarian relationships. "Nationalization of the land," Lenin wrote in his classical work "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907," "is not only the sole means for completely eliminating medievalism in agriculture, but also the best form of agrarian relationships conceivable under capitalism."<sup>2</sup>) This was an example of the creative development of Marx's revolu-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 6, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 13, p. 426.

tionary theory and its masterful application to the concrete historical conditions in Russia. Lenin provided exhaustive answers to vital questions and outlined ways for solving the agrarian problem in the interests of the working class and the working peasantry in both bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions.

In the 1905-1907 revolution, the first bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia, the Russian peasantry supported Lenin's agrarian programme. This revolution failed to solve the agrarian and other tasks set before it. It was defeated, but the causes for it remained as did the main political aim of the Bolsheviks: the complete victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and its development into a socialist revolution. Nor were there changes in the programme demands of the party: a democratic republic, confiscation of the landlords' land in favour of the peasants, and eight-hour working day, the right of nations to self-determination and others.

The party and the working class won one position after another from the bourgeoisie. Life itself had convinced the peasants that they would receive neither land nor democratic freedoms from the bourgeoisie. The only force which could help the peasants was the proletariat and its militant vanguard—the Bolshevik party. The First World War, which began in August 1914, laid bare all the inner contradictions in Russia and accelerated the growth of revolutionary forces. In the first years of the war alone, 7.4 million peasants were mobilized and sent to the front. Factories came to a standstill and sown areas decreased. Lenin wrote that the war had produced starvation in the towns and ruin in the countryside. Many small farms lacked both draft animals and agricultural implements. The defeat of the tsarist army at the front and the difficult economic position at home intensified the



workers' strike movement and the peasants' actions against the landowners; the army was becoming demoralized.

At the call of the Bolsheviks, workers, peasants and soldiers came out under the slogans: "Down with the tsar!", "Down with war!", "Give us bread!".

The soldiers—peasants and workers in army greatcoats—joined the ranks of the insurgents.

## **FORWARD TO GREAT ACHIEVEMENT**

February 1917 saw the collapse of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty in Russia.

The second Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution was victorious throughout the country. Everywhere representatives of tsarism were swept from office, and revolutionary organs of the resurgent people—Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were formed. Soviets of Peasants' and Agricultural Labourers' Deputies were set up in the villages. The dominant force of the revolution was the working class which implemented Lenin's idea that it must ally itself with the vast masses of the peasants.

The bourgeoisie, supported by the governments of England and France, was unable to retain the monarchy in Russia. But side by side with the Soviets which were establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, a Provisional Government—organ of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—was set up in Petrograd behind the people's back by agreement between the Provisional Committee of the State Duma and representatives of petty-bourgeois parties—Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks—who had wormed their way into the Petrograd Soviet.

The bourgeoisie was able to seize power because the broad masses of the proletariat were not well

enough organized and had not sufficient political consciousness. Tens of millions of people who had not taken any part in politics before were involved in the revolution. It was this wave that brought to the surface and placed at the head of the Soviets and other mass organizations, parties of class collaboration, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who were the political spokesmen of the petty bourgeoisie.

The chief distinguishing feature of the February revolution was the dual power which arose in its first days: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie exercised by the Provisional Government and the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants put into effect by the Soviets.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries considered that the bourgeoisie was destined to play a decisive role in the revolution and should take power. And the Soviets, in which at that time these parties predominated were, in their opinion, to help the bourgeoisie. The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries would not accept the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and did everything possible to convert the Soviets into accomplices of the bourgeoisie. They persuaded the people to postpone solving the questions of peace, land and bread. Thus the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries openly supported agreement with the bourgeoisie and entered the struggle to retain and strengthen the capitalist system.

The most pressing question was land. In the European part of tsarist Russia 30 thousand landowners owned 70 million *dessiatinas* while 10.5 million poor peasant homesteads had only 75 million *dessiatinas*. On the average, one peasant family owned 7 *dessiatinas*, but millions of peasant families had less than two. At the same

time, for example, the estates of the counts Bobrinsky and the princes Volkonsky covered whole *uyezds* (districts). One landowner, Rukavishnikov, owned over 800 thousand *dessiatinas* and another, Golitsyn—more than one million. The tsar with 7 million *dessiatinas* was the biggest landowner in Russia. He owned more land than did one million peasant families. On thirty per cent of the peasants' farms there were no horses, on 34 per cent no agricultural implements and on 15 per cent none of the land was under crops. Most peasants ate meat only a few times a year, and sugar was considered an unattainable luxury. Sixty-five per cent of the poor peasants never had enough flour to last them till the new harvest.

The February revolution did not give land to the peasants. The Provisional Government dared not touch the landed estates and tried by all means to postpone the solution of the agrarian problem.

After the fall of tsarism the peasants rose against the landlords.

When news of the February revolution reached them, peasants in many regions began to divide up the landowners' lands.

In fighting the agrarian "disorders" the Provisional Government used the well-tried methods of tsarism. In March 1917, in the Kazan province criminal proceedings were instituted against all persons who took part in the agrarian movement against landed proprietorship. As well, punitive detachments were sent to the Kursk, Mogilev and Perm *gubernias* (provinces).

The bourgeoisie and the conciliators called the seizure of land "arbitrariness" and advocated "voluntary" agreements between the peasants and the landowners. Lenin saw in land seizures restoration of the peasants' right to it. He considered that voluntary agreements between the

peasants and the landowners in the interests of the peasants were impossible. He wrote: "We say: 'Let a decision be taken by the majority; we want the peasants to obtain the landed estates now, without losing a single month, a single week or even a single day'."<sup>1</sup>)

The Bolsheviks called upon the peasants to seize the land without delay, to solve the agrarian problem in a revolutionary way without waiting for the Constituent Assembly, to set up Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Soviets of Agricultural Labourers everywhere.

In the difficult conditions of dual power the Bolshevik party won the majority of the workers and peasants to its side, exposed the manoeuvres of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government which were intended to deceive the people, prolong the war and postpone a solution of the agrarian problem. The Bolsheviks explained that only by placing power in the hands of the working class and the poorest peasants could peace, bread and land be ensured for the workers, peasants and soldiers, and conditions for building a new life created.

On April 3 (16—new style), 1917, Lenin returned to Russia from abroad where he had been obliged to emigrate to escape prosecution by the tsarist authorities. While abroad, with brilliant foresight he had defined the new stage in the development of the Russian revolution. In his "Letters from Afar" and other works he urged the workers to prepare for the second, i.e. socialist, stage of the revolution that must be carried out by the proletariat—the predominant force which had allies in the semi-proletarian elements in the towns and countryside. This alliance and only it could bring a solution of the problem of "all

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 492.

land" to the peasants, of full freedom and full power to the people.

In his famous "April Theses" written the day after his arrival in Petrograd Lenin clearly defined prospects for the development of the revolution and the transition from a bourgeois-democratic to a socialist revolution.

"The specific feature of the present situation in Russia," he wrote, "is that the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its second stage which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants."<sup>1</sup>)

After characterizing the motive forces of the new revolution, he defined the political form of organization of power—the passing of all power to the Soviets. "Not a parliamentary republic," wrote Lenin, "...but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom."<sup>2</sup>)

Lenin drew the party's attention to the need to create a class organization in the countryside—Soviets of Agricultural Labourers. These Soviets would provide the political basis for the implementation of the party's programme during the transition from the bourgeois-democratic to a socialist revolution.

The party's immediate tasks in the countryside were confiscation of the landed estates and the nationalisation of all land. The nationalization of the land, he said later, was not only "the last word" of the bourgeois revolution but also a step forward towards socialism.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 23.

In pursuing a course for socialist revolution Lenin was guided by the experience of world working-class struggle and took account of the international situation. But above all he considered those factors which applied directly to Russia.

In the obtaining conditions Lenin saw the possibility of power passing peacefully to the revolutionary people if the Soviets could be won over to the side of the proletariat.

As distinct from all previous revolutions, in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the people had a ready-made apparatus of power. If the Soviets, which represented the workers and peasants, the overwhelming majority of the people, declared that they had assumed absolute power, no one would dare to oppose them. Peaceful struggle within the Soviets could then bring about a new government. The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry would develop into a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

Carefully and eagerly, the workers, soldiers and peasants read Lenin's "April Theses," in which he proposed a concrete scientific plan for the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution and outlined the political platform of the Bolshevik party on questions of war, peace and revolution. Demands for confiscation of the landed estates occupy a central place in the agrarian programme put forward by the Bolsheviks in the theses.

The people began to see the truth in what Lenin said. His simply written scientific articles which were published in those days in the Bolshevik press, helped the workers, soldiers and peasants to understand the prospects for a socialist revolution. They clearly taught the peasants how in the difficult and contradictory situation of that time to distinguish who was their friend

and who was their enemy. Articles on peace, land, power, on the counter-revolutionary role played by the Socialist-Revolutionaries carried Lenin's ideas to the peasants.

Lenin well knew that the workers, soldiers and peasants were interested in three questions: war, land and the state system. To these questions he gave very clear answers: the war must be brought to an end, and peace would come only when all power passed completely to the Soviets; the land must belong to the people—landowners' properties must be transferred to the peasants without compensation; the new type of state must be a republic of the Soviets.

The 7th All-Russia Conference of the Bolsheviks, held in April 1917, based its decisions on Lenin's "April Theses." Lenin's directives became a guide to action for the whole party.

The conference decisions, which were widely discussed throughout the country, reflected the vital demands of millions of poor peasants who were freeing themselves from the influence of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, were going over to the side of the Bolshevik party and supporting its slogans.

After the conference the Bolshevik party, led by Lenin, began the truly gigantic work of educating and organizing the masses. In three months—from April to June—Lenin wrote over 150 articles and brochures in which he castigated the enemies of the revolution, explained how wrong was the conciliatory policy of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, exposed the imperialist essence of the policy of the Provisional Government, showed the correctness of the Bolshevik revolutionary slogans aimed at the victory of socialism. "Outside of socialism," said Lenin, "there is no deliverance of humanity

from wars, from hunger, from the destruction of still more millions and millions of human beings.”<sup>1)</sup>

Lenin laid special stress on the need to strengthen by all means the alliance of the working class with the poorest sections of the peasantry. Only such an alliance, one in which the proletariat played the dominant role and which was led by the Bolshevik party, could overthrow the power of the capitalists and deliver the working people from the horrors of war.

The events that followed showed that Lenin had been right. On April 18 (May 1), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government, Milyukov, sent the Entente powers a note stating that the Provisional Government intended to observe all treaties made by the tsarist government and that Russia would carry on the war to a victorious conclusion. When the workers and soldiers heard about this, they went out into the streets with such slogans as: “All Power to the Soviets!”, “End the War!”, “Down with Milyukov!”, “Down with Guchkov!”.

Lenin warned the workers and soldiers against such slogans as “Down with Milyukov!” and “Down with Guchkov!” since the bourgeoisie could change the composition of the government, but this would not change the government’s imperialist policy.

At the call of the Bolshevik party Petrograd workers stopped work on April 21 (May 4) and marched in the streets demanding peace.

The April demonstrations inspired wavering elements to go over to the side of the proletariat and marked the beginning of the crisis of the Provisional Government.

Under the influence of Bolshevik propaganda and agitation peasant associations began to be formed at factories, plants and mines. They

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 37.



united workers—natives of the same *volost* (small rural district), district and province. Many soldiers were drawn into these associations which took up collections, bought literature for the peasants, and sent their representatives to the countryside to act as propagandists.

Only the Bolshevik party fought to have power concentrated in the hands of the revolutionary peasants and workers, which was the only way of delivering the country from foreign bondage and ruin. On June 3, 1917, Lenin, speaking at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, stressed that the only way to overcome the impasse in which the country found itself was to transfer all power to the Soviets, that only the Soviets could give food to the people and land to the peasants, win peace and lead the country out of ruin.

When the Menshevik, Tsereteli, declared that there was no political party in Russia that could assume full power, Lenin, on behalf of the Bolshevik party said confidently: "Yes, there is!" In his speech from the platform of the Congress he said that the Bolshevik party was "ready to take over full power at any moment."

#### **PRINCIPAL DEMANDS OF THE AGRARIAN PROGRAMME**

Lenin declared that with the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, the agrarian problem had become immeasurably wider, deeper and more acute than in 1905-1907.

What were the principal demands of Lenin's agrarian programme at the socialist stage of the revolution in Russia? *Immediate confiscation of the landed estates and nationalization of all land.*

It was intended to implement these demands on another socio-economic and political basis,

i.e., not within the framework of a democratic republic but within the framework of a socialist republic of Soviets.

At the 7th (April) Conference in 1917 Lenin had put forward important propositions concerning the socialist transformation of agriculture. "The party of the proletariat," ran the resolution of the conference, "must advise the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians to strive to convert every landed estate into a fair-sized model farm to be run on public lines by the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies under the direction of agricultural experts with the application of the best technique."<sup>1</sup>)

Pointing out to the Mensheviks, who said that the peasants cultivated the fields they had taken from the landowners very poorly, Lenin said that it was necessary to help the peasants, especially poor peasants, to start joint cultivation of the landowners' lands.

The party supported the initiative of those peasants' committees which in a number of places transferred the livestock and agricultural implements from the landowners' estates to peasants' organizations for the cultivation of all lands. In his report to the April Conference Lenin pointed to the example of the Penza province where the peasants did not distribute the stock of the landowners' estates among homesteads but turned it into social property and used it in turn for the cultivation of all lands. Vladimir Ilyich saw in this fact a form of productive cooperation among peasants.

"To be sure," stated Lenin, "joint cultivation is a difficult business, and it would be madness of course for anybody to imagine that joint cultivation of the land can be decreed from above and imposed on people, because the centuries-old habit of farm-

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<sup>1</sup>) *The CPSU in Resolutions*, Part I, pp. 341-342.

ing on one's own cannot suddenly disappear, and because money will be needed for it and adaptation to the new mode of life."<sup>1</sup>)

In elaborating the question on ways of transition of the peasants to large-scale socialized farming, Lenin emphasized that the transition to joint cultivation of the land must be effected gradually and with circumspection. He pointed to the complexity of this undertaking which required from the peasants very much hard work, resolve and energy.

On the agrarian problem the conference adopted a resolution Lenin had prepared. It reflected the party's line that an alliance of the working class with the poorest peasants was an indispensable condition for achieving victory at the new stage of the struggle.

Lenin displayed tireless energy in organizing the revolutionary forces of the peasants and rural proletariat for the implementation of the Bolshevik agrarian programme.

Land nationalization, the abolition of land proprietorship dealt a heavy blow to private ownership not only of land but also of all the means of production which were in the hands of the exploiters.

Lenin pointed out that it was not the capitalists or the rich peasants (who were also capitalists) whom the peasants could trust, but only the town workers. Only in alliance with them would the poorest peasants succeed in transferring the land, railways, banks and factories to all the working people. We want a republic, he stressed, in which all power from top to bottom belongs fully and exclusively to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

Vladimir Ilyich took an active part in the work of the First All-Russia Congress of So-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 502.

viets of Peasants' Deputies which was attended by 1,115 delegates. Of this number less than 100 delegates shared the views of the Bolsheviks, the remainder supporting the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks.

At this congress Lenin led the Bolshevik group, instructing the Bolshevik speakers and answering numerous questions put by the delegates.

Many of the delegates warmly supported Lenin's proposals. Thus, a representative of the peasants of a southern province, Nikitin, said in his speech that the peasants of the region on whose behalf he spoke did not want any more promises and, in particular, did not want to wait for a solution of the agrarian problem until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. The peasants of his region held that it was not promises they needed but the right to deal with all the lands in the province.

Most delegates supported the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants. They had brought to the Congress 242 mandates from the peasants in which the senders demanded electivity of all offices, abolition of estates, ranks, orders and titles, disbandment after the war of the regular army, abolition, without compensation, of all privately owned land, including the peasants' lands, confiscation of all livestock, implements, and landed estates and equitable distribution of the land among the working people. Lenin observed that it was sufficient to reflect only a little on the peasants' demands to be able to see that these could not be realized in alliance with the capitalists, without completely breaking with them. Only the revolutionary proletariat and only its vanguard—the Bolshevik party which united it—could actually carry out the programme of the village poor stated in the peasants' mandates.

The working peasants' struggle against the landowners and kulaks greatly intensified after the First All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies. The peasants no longer blindly believed the Socialist-Revolutionaries and began to understand the agrarian programme of Lenin's party. Ruined by the war and excessive taxes they rose against the landowners. The predominant form of this struggle was the seizure of the landed estates.

Lenin considered it to be the duty of the Bolshevik party not only to advocate its agrarian programme. He demanded the implementation of "practical measures which can be immediately realized in the interests of the peasant agrarian revolution in Russia,"<sup>1)</sup> and persistently recommended that the Bolsheviks support the actions of the peasants and render them practical help.

Lenin was the first Marxist, the first man in the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia to put forward the idea of a revolutionary alliance of the workers and the peasants as the principal means of overthrowing tsarism, and the power of the landowners and the bourgeoisie. This he had done as early as the 90s of the 19th century.

## BEFORE THE DECISIVE STORM

Dissatisfaction on the part of the workers and peasants with the policy of the Provisional Government and its Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik yes-men spread. Striking manifestations of it were the events of July 1917 in Petrograd and throughout Russia. They began on July 3 (16) with a spontaneous action of the soldiers and workers of the Vyborg Side (a workers' district of Petrograd) against the Provi-

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 71.

sional Government. They staged a protest which grew into a mass demonstration by workers and soldiers of Petrograd. The bourgeois Provisional Government, with the consent of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, ordered troops to fire on this peaceful procession with the result that blood was spilled on the streets of Petrograd.

This act ended dual power—all power passed into the hands of the counter-revolution. Repprisals were initiated. The Bolshevik party went underground and its leader Lenin into hiding.

The working class could now take power only by armed revolt. Lenin proposed that they temporarily withdraw the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!". This did not mean repudiating the Soviets as a new type of state system. The question hinged on the fact that the Soviets of those days were led by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks who had openly gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie.

In August 1917, the 6th Congress of the Bolshevik party was convened in Petrograd to work out new tactics to meet the changed political situation. The Central Committee submitted its report which was discussed along with the political situation. In a resolution on the political situation the Congress declared: "Peaceful development and the painless transfer of power to the Soviets have now become impossible because, in fact, power has passed into the hands of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Today, the only correct slogan can be that of completely abolishing the dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Only the revolutionary proletariat, provided it is supported by the poorest sections of the peasants, is able to carry out this task which is a task of a new upsurge."<sup>1)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> *The CPSU in Resolutions*, Part I, p. 376.

All the congress decisions were permeated with Lenin's concept of an alliance between the working class and the poorest peasants as a necessary condition for the victory of the socialist revolution.

Lenin guided the party and the revolutionary movement of the masses from underground. He had every confidence that the socialist revolution would be victorious and that power would soon pass into the hands of the proletariat. In preparing the working class and the poorest sections of the peasantry for the taking of power, Vladimir Ilyich in his works "The State and Revolution," "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" and others, developed the Marxist theory of the state, and outlined the policy and the first practical measures of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The July events put the landowners in a bellicose mood. They formed landowners' associations and joined hands with the kulaks and the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie to fight the peasants. Members of peasants' committees and revolutionary-minded peasants were arrested. Military units were sent "to suppress the villages." While in March-June there were 17 cases of armed suppression of peasants' actions, their number in July-August was 39 and in September-October—1,905.

The middle peasants, who had hesitated in the period from April to August, began to join the village poor. The number of Bolshevik deputies in the Soviets began to increase and the non-party deputies now supported the Bolsheviks.

According to very incomplete data collected by the Provisional Government, the peasant movement in 1917 assumed unprecedented scope. In May, 152 peasants' actions were recorded, in June—112, in July—387, in August—440 and

in September—958. In September-October the peasant movement reached its highest point and assumed the character of a revolt.

In the resolution of the First Congress of Peasants of the Armies of the Western Front, held on October 22 (November 4), 1917, in Minsk, delegates demanded "immediate transfer to the land committees of all lands without exception as well as livestock, implements, state, private and other estates."<sup>1</sup>)

In September 1917, due to the increased influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets, Lenin again put forward the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" Now it meant armed revolt against the bourgeois Provisional Government to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The country was going through a general crisis. A revolutionary situation had developed. "Behind us is the majority of the class,\* the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people capable of leading the masses," wrote Lenin at the time.

The character of the peasant movement also changed. The peasants forcibly drove out the landowners and seized their lands and implements. The peasant movement grew into a revolt that spread all over the country.

At their meetings in a district of the Oryol province the peasants used to say: "Now we know why the Bolsheviks were so persecuted, we know who Lenin is, he and the Bolsheviks wish us well."

The majority of the people followed the Bolshevik Party and Lenin. At the election to the Zemstvo<sup>2</sup>) in the *volosts*, which was held in September-October 1917, simultaneously with the election to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers'

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<sup>1</sup>) *Pravda*, November 1 (14), 1917.

<sup>2</sup>) Zemstvo — elective district council in pre-revolutionary Russia.



and Peasants' Deputies, peasantseverywhere voted for the Bolsheviks. Troops refused to continue the war, drove out reactionary commanders and elected others in their stead. Their discontent threatened to turn into a revolt. On the Northern and Western fronts, which were nearest to Petrograd and Moscow, the majority of the soldiers followed the Bolsheviks. The sailors of the Baltic Fleet completely supported the Bolshevik party.

The movement among the oppressed nations in Russia also strengthened, and became more closely united with the mass workers' and the peasants' movement. The general national crisis also affected the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The Menshevik party split into several parties. A left wing formed in the Socialist Revolutionary Party and declared its independence. The "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries tried to lead those sections of the peasants who were disappointed with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and were following the Bolsheviks.

Lenin, still underground, carefully watching the situation, responded to the slightest changes in people's sentiment and in the correlation of class forces.

The "lower strata" of the peasants who had lost faith in the Socialist-Revolutionaries, drove them out of their committees. Reports coming in from the provinces showed that conditions were ripening for a peasant revolt. Peasants of the Vremyevsk *volost* in the Ekaterinoslav province passed a resolution at a meeting saying: "...In the interests of preservation of Russia and the revolution we, peasants of the Vremyevsk *volost*, resolve: all the lands on the territory of our *volost* belonging to big landowners are to be taken from them without payment. We call upon all *volosts* in our district to follow our example, since at present the only means of saving Rus-

sia and the revolution is for the whole people to take power into their hands. Only when power is actually in the people's hands and is supported by the people, will this power be able to give land to the peasants and bread to the workers."

Lenin saw the peasant revolt as a revolutionary crisis, the eve of a socialist revolution. "In the face of such a fact as a peasant revolt all other political symptoms, even were they to contradict the fact that a nation-wide crisis is maturing, would have no significance whatsoever."<sup>1)</sup>

The autumn 1917 peasant revolts were a chief factor in the nation-wide crisis, they showed that the "lower strata" of the peasants had risen to the struggle. The overwhelming majority of the peasants, worn out and embittered by the evasive policy of Kerensky's "coalition" government, fully supported the proletariat.

The armed workers and those peasants in the army who backed the Bolsheviks, provided reliable support for the party; they were the armed forces of the revolution ready to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

In accordance with Lenin's proposal, the revolt began on October 24, on the eve of the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets. By the morning of October 25, the Provisional Government had been overthrown. The appeal "To the Citizens of Russia!", written by Lenin, said:

"The cause for which the people had fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured.

"Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!"<sup>2)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 79.

<sup>2)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 236.

## REAL FREEDOM

In the large bright assembly hall at Smolny late in the evening of October 25 (November 7), 1917, the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets opened. The congress adopted an address "To Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!", written by Lenin, which said:

"Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands...

"The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order."<sup>1</sup>)

In such manner did the workers in alliance with the poorest peasants under the guidance of the proletariat, overthrew the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and established the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Late in the evening of October 24 (November 6) Lenin came to Smolny and from there guided the revolt. After the Winter Palace had been stormed and taken, and the Provisional Government arrested, Vladimir Ilyich during the night of October 25-26 (November 7-8) went to the apartment of V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich for a few hours' rest.

This is what V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich tells us in his reminiscences:

"We had some supper, after which I tried to do what I could to ensure Vladimir Ilyich had a rest... With great difficulty I persuaded him to take my bed in a separate small room where a desk, paper, ink and a library were at his service.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 247.

"I lay down on a sofa in the next room and decided not to fall asleep without making sure first that Vladimir Ilyich was sleeping.

"I became drowsy and was just falling asleep when a light flashed on in Vladimir Ilyich's room. I heard him get up almost noiselessly, saw him open the door to my room and, satisfying himself that I was asleep (I certainly was not), tiptoed quietly, so as not to disturb anybody, to the desk. *He then sat down, spread some papers on the desk, opened the inkpot, and became absorbed in work.*

"He wrote, crossed out something, read, made some extracts and at last appeared to be making a fair copy of what he had written. Day was already breaking, the Petrograd late autumn morning was turning grey when Vladimir Ilyich turned out the light, lay down on the bed and fell asleep.

"In the morning, when it was time to get up, I warned my family to be very quiet as Vladimir Ilyich had worked through the night and would be very tired. Suddenly, before anyone expected him, he appeared fully dressed, energetic, fresh, active, joyful and jocular. 'Congratulations on the first day of the socialist revolution!', he said to all of us. No trace of weariness was to be seen on his face, though, as a matter of fact, he had slept two or three hours at the most after such a terrible twenty-hour working day. When we sat down to tea and Nadezhda Konstantinovna, who had also spent the night with us, came out, Vladimir Ilyich took out of his pocket some neatly copied sheets of paper and began to read to us his famous 'Decree on Land.'

"Now it just needs to be announced, widely published and spread! Then let anyone try to take it back! No, not a bit of it, no power is able to take this decree away from the peasants and return the lands to the landowners. This is a most

important gain of the October revolution. The agrarian reform will be accomplished and secured this very day.'

"And he began to tell us in detail about this decree and that the peasants would welcome it because it was based on the demands set out in the peasants' mandates to their deputies which were reflected in the general mandates to the Congress of the Soviets.

"And they were all Socialist-Revolutionaries. People will say that we are borrowing from them,' someone remarked.

"Vladimir Ilyich said smiling: 'Let them talk. The peasants will clearly understand that we will always support all their just demands. We must come up close to the peasants, to their life, to their wishes. And if some fools laugh, let them laugh. We were never going to grant the Socialist-Revolutionaries a monopoly on the peasants. We are the main government party, and the peasant problem is the most important question after the dictatorship of the proletariat'.")<sup>1)</sup>

The second session of the Congress of the Soviets opened at 9 o'clock in the evening of October 26 (November 8). Lenin's appearance was greeted with thunderous applause. He first spoke on the question of peace, the burning issue of those times about which much had been written. The delegates unanimously approved Lenin's "Decree on Peace" which said that the Workers' and Peasants' Government created by the revolution and supported by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies proposed that all belligerent nations and their governments begin negotiations at once for a just, democratic peace.

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<sup>1)</sup> *Reminiscences about V. I. Lenin*, Part I. Gospolitizdat, 1956. pp. 624—626.

The Congress of the Soviets, over the heads of the imperialist governments, called on working people everywhere, on the most class-conscious toilers in the capitalist countries of the West, to deliver humanity from the horrors of war and its results. It expressed the firm conviction that they would now understand this to be their duty and would help to bring about peace.

The "Decree on Peace" was enthusiastically received by the working peasants. The imperialist war was bringing poverty and ruin to the peasants, who bore the brunt of it since they formed the greater part of the population of Russia. Peasants and soldiers who, on the eve of the October armed revolt in Petrograd, had still followed the Socialist-Revolutionaries or were wavering, became, after the publication of the "Decree on Peace," supporters of the working class and the Bolsheviks.

After the Congress passed the "Decree on Peace," Lenin delivered a speech on the problem of land to a crowded meeting.

Loudly cheered by the delegates, Lenin read the "Decree on Land":

"(1) Landed proprietorship is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

"(2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the *volost* land committees and the *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

"(3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to

determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc."<sup>1</sup>)

Lenin's "Decree on Land" expressed the agrarian programme of the Bolshevik party. It reflected the centuries-old aspirations of the working peasants which were now being realized. Land became national property. This decree showed the working peasants that Soviet power was eliminating the landowners once and for all and that the land was actually being transferred to those who tilled it. Thus the nationalization of land was carried out.

The solution of the agrarian problem showed Lenin's wisdom and insight. Not hiding his disagreement with some points of the peasants' mandate, he proposed at the Congress to take it as a basis for the agrarian platform of the Great October Socialist Revolution. He did so because the mandate contained, in common with the Bolshevik programme, the demand to confiscate all land belonging to the landowners, the crown, the church and the monasteries and their transfer to the local Soviet organs and also because the mandate was supported by the majority of the peasants.

On behalf of their electorates the congress delegates expressed their deep gratitude to the highest organ of Soviet power and to Lenin as the staunchest defender of the village poor.

The abolition of landed proprietorship was an enormous gain for the Soviet state and delivered the peasants from servitude to the landowners. Land ceased to be a tool of exploitation. In ad-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 258.

dition to what they had before, the peasants received from the Soviet state, free of charge, some 150 million hectares. They were relieved of the heavy burden of paying about 700 million gold roubles annually in rent to the landowners and in addition peasants' debts to the bourgeois-landowner bank to the value of nearly 1,500 million roubles were written off.

The "Decree on Land" realized three principal revolutionary tasks: first, the survivals of serfdom in land relationships were eradicated thus fulfilling the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; second, the alliance of the proletariat with the poorest peasants was strengthened; third, a start was made of the transformation of agriculture on socialist lines.

"In this peasant country," wrote Lenin, "it was the peasantry as a whole who were the first to gain, who gained most, and gained immediately from the dictatorship of the proletariat... For the first time the peasant has seen real freedom—freedom to eat his bread, freedom from starvation."<sup>1</sup>)

### ...A GOOD JUDGE OF PEASANT LIFE

The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution was the triumph of Lenin's policy for an alliance between the working class and the peasantry.

In the countryside, just as in the towns, life was being rebuilt on new lines. At this time delegates from remote Russian villages visited Lenin almost every day. On money collected by the village community they came to see "the chief Bolshevik," as they called Lenin, and to talk to him about their affairs and needs.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 112.



Lenin called life and collective experience of the people the best teacher. He said that the intellect of tens of millions of creators accomplished something immeasurably higher than the greatest and most brilliant foresight. Lenin entirely merged with the masses, was of the same kind as they. He did not want by a single gesture or by the expression on his face to exert pressure on people as a "leading personality."

Peasants who visited Lenin were filled with sincere and deep confidence in the Communist Party and Soviet power.

After visiting Lenin they would say: "What a clever chief we have now! He is also a good judge of peasant life. This is what we call power. This is genuine peasant power." After a visit some would ask for "a paper" on which it was written that the delegate in question had actually been received by Lenin.

Lenin received thousands of letters in which the peasants asked him to explain to them the decrees of Soviet power. He complied with their request in an article "Reply to Questions from Peasants," in which he wrote that the workers' revolution had triumphed in Petrograd and Moscow and all other places in Russia. Landed proprietorship had been abolished. The *volost* land committees must at once take all landed estates into their hands and keep the strictest account of them, protecting the former property of the landowners which from that time on was the property of the whole people.

"The Council of People's Commissars," wrote Lenin, "calls upon the peasants to take all power into their own hands in their respective localities. The workers give their full, undivided, all-round support to the peasants, are getting the production of machines and implements started, and ask the peasants to help by delivering grain."<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 300.

It was now the task of the Bolshevik party to help the peasants carry into effect the decrees passed by the Second Congress of the Soviets. On this depended their attitude towards Soviet rule and the Bolshevik party. On Lenin's initiative the party's Central Committee ordered propagandists to be sent to different localities.

At peasants' meetings in the villages, at soldiers' meetings and at conferences of the district and provincial Soviets the propagandists explained the "Decree on Land" and the agrarian problem. They said that having received land the peasants must speed up deliveries of grain to the towns in order to eliminate the threat of famine.

The propagandists, that were chosen from among the advanced workers and revolutionary-minded soldiers who had returned from the front, won the peasants over to the side of Soviet power.

Peasants in the village of Borki in the Serdobsky *uyezd*, Saratov province, after hearing the speech by a representative of the Soviet on the present situation and the decrees of the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets, expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the author of the "Decree on Land." "We consider this decree," they said in a resolution, "to be a sacred one delivering the working people from distressing age-long oppression... Honour, glory and our deepest and most sincere gratitude are due to those who have issued this decree."

Receiving a delegation from the Saratov province, Vladimir Ilyich first of all asked: "Well, how are things going with you? How are the Saratov *muzhiks*?... They are golden people."

He asked the delegates about the local peasant movement and how it was developing, whether the support of the peasants could be relied upon, whether they would deliver grain and,

finally, what was being done to win them over to the side of Soviet power.

Lenin regularly visited enterprises and army units, spent long hours studying reports of local and central executive workers, constantly followed the newspapers and journals and never missed any important article or brochure on the first steps of socialist construction. He carefully read the many letters he received from working people. He taught Soviet executives and economy managers how to win the confidence of the masses by acting in a comradely way towards them and carefully attending to their needs. Vladimir Ilyich personally examined complaints sent in by working people and responded sharply to all cases of injustice and formal and bureaucratic attitude.

Numerous letters, notes, telegrams and resolutions show Lenin's deep respect for every toiler, his frankness and cordiality.

## STRUGGLE AGAINST COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The peasant masses received the decrees of Soviet power and the first agrarian reforms of the new government with enthusiasm and great satisfaction.

As a result of land nationalization the class of landowners ceased to exist, and all the land became the property of the whole people.

But the establishment of Soviet rule had to proceed in the difficult conditions of sharp struggle against the enemies of the working class and the working peasants. In some regions the counter-revolutionary elements managed by deceiving the masses to retain power in their hands. In order to undermine confidence in Soviet power, these elements tried to sow discord among the peasants of different villages and *volosts*. They set peasants of different villages against one

another and sent detachments for procuring grain to villages where the peasants themselves were starving. The party's Central Committee received a great many enquiries on how the "Decree on Land" should be implemented. Lenin and the Central Committee did much to disseminate local experience in implementing the decree. A secretary of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party E. D. Stasova in a letter to Syzran wrote of the experience of Communists in the Rzhev district of the Tver province. There all the landowners' estates had been placed at the disposal of the *volost* land committees. On some estates agricultural schools had been opened.

Lenin considered it necessary to set up Soviets of Peasants' Deputies in all villages to help the peasants fight the counter-revolutionary forces and put the decrees of Soviet power into effect. In order to ensure the fullest guidance of the peasantry and help to them by the proletariat, it was considered necessary to unite the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies into a single organization and concentrate full power in their hands.

The Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, held in November 1917, recognized all the gains of the October Socialist Revolution and endorsed Soviet decrees. On the insistence of the peasant deputies, who represented the peasant masses, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries came to an agreement with the Bolsheviks and acknowledged the decrees of the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets.

The Central Executive Committee, dominated by the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, called a new congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies at which it hoped to avenge its defeat. The right to elect deputies to this congress was given only to the provincial Soviets of Peasants'

Deputies. In this way the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries hoped to secure a majority at the congress.

Lenin kept a watchful eye on the machinations of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. On November 23 (December 6), 1917, the Council of People's Commissars issued, on Lenin's initiative, a decree "On the Right to Recall Deputies." This decree entitled the working people to recall those deputies who did not defend their interests and replace them by worthy representatives. The decree helped the working people to clear the Soviets of undesirable elements, including the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, which was convened on the initiative of the Central Executive Committee dominated by the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, opened on November 26 (December 9), 1917. The Right Socialist-Revolutionaries' attempt at effective opposition to Soviet rule fell through. In his report Lenin showed that the Soviets expressed the will of the masses. The Right Socialist-Revolutionaries left the Congress, but it continued its work. The Congress endorsed the decrees of the Soviet Government on peace and on land and adopted an appeal to the peasants, the draft of which had been written by Lenin. The appeal called upon the peasants to amalgamate the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies with the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The congress elected a new executive committee of 108 members which merged with the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (ARCEC). The highest organ of Soviet power was set up—the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. It took the decision to appoint several Left Socialist-Revolutionaries as

members of the Council of People's Commissars and include representatives of that party in the collegiums of all people's commissariats.

Favourable conditions arose for the organization of local Soviets and elimination of the remains of the old bourgeois apparatus both in town and country.

In December 1917, and January 1918, provincial peasants' congresses were held throughout the country; new elections to the peasant executive committees which had been dominated by Right Socialist-Revolutionaries took place; the newly elected executive committees merged with the provincial executive committees of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

After the victory of the October revolution a part of the workers and peasants continued to believe that the Constituent Assembly would pursue a policy answering their interests. Therefore the relationships of the working class with the peasants depended to a considerable extent on the correct attitude of the Bolsheviks towards the Constituent Assembly. The pre-election campaign to the Constituent Assembly had been carried on before the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, but the election was held in November when the correlation of class forces had already changed in favour of the Bolsheviks. However, the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries still had influence among the peasants, particularly in outlying regions. By their assurances of loyalty to the interests of the peasants they "drove into the Constituent Assembly on the backs of the peasants." The majority received by the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries at the election was also due to the fact that in a number of provinces there were no lists of candidates from the Bolshevik party. At election time the peasants of many provinces had gone over to the side of the Bolsheviks and by De-

cember the party of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries no longer had any influence among the people. Thus, the party composition of the Constituent Assembly did not reflect the new correlation of class forces. Why then did the Soviet Government agree to its convocation? This is explained by the fact that in sending their representatives to the Constituent Assembly the workers and labouring peasants saw in it a new weapon for storming the remaining positions of the bourgeoisie.

The demands of the peasants to convene the Constituent Assembly were connected with their belief that it would help them consolidate the gains achieved in land reform.

The Soviet Government decided to convene the Constituent Assembly so that through experience the masses could be convinced that the hopes pinned on it were groundless.

On the January 5 (18), 1918, Y. M. Sverdlov, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, opened the Constituent Assembly and announced the "Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People" drawn up by Lenin and endorsed by the ARCEC. Its first clause stated: "Russia is hereby proclaimed a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. All power, centrally and locally, is vested in these Soviets."<sup>1</sup>) The declaration further stated that for the purpose of implementing the socialization of the land, private ownership of land was abolished and all land was declared to be the property of the whole people and was transferred to the working people without any redemption on the basis of equitable land tenure.

The declaration confirmed the laws on workers' control and on the passing of all banks into

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 423.

the hands of the Soviet Government. It stated that the Constituent Assembly associated itself with the policy pursued by the Soviet Government of rejecting secret treaties, organizing the widest possible fraternization between the workers and peasants of the belligerent armies, and the achievement, at all costs, by revolutionary means of a democratic peace between nations, without annexations and indemnities, on the basis of free self-determination of nations.

The Constituent Assembly rejected the declaration, without even discussing it. By refusing to discuss it the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries showed what an enormous abyss lay between themselves and the majority of the peasants. Thus, the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks fully exposed themselves before the peasants and the soldiers.

The Bolsheviks walked out of the Constituent Assembly followed somewhat later by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries.

Expressing the will of the working people, the ARCEC decided to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. This decision was supported by the masses throughout the country.

The party's tactics, guided by Lenin, regarding the Constituent Assembly strengthened the alliance of the working class and the peasants.

## THE FIRST STEPS

The first experience of the masses in building the Soviet state was summed up at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Soviets which was held in January 1918. Lenin said then that, in future, too, only the alliance of the workers and the poorest peasants could secure firm support for Soviet rule.



The "Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People" adopted by the congress strengthened the new state system formed on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat—a republic of the Soviets. Of great importance was the decree "On Federal Institutions of the Russian Republic" in which the general principles of the Constitution of the RSFSR were outlined. The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who at the congress opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat under the slogans of a bourgeois democracy did not receive any support.

Lenin exposed "Socialists" who were advocating the "conciliation of classes" as lackeys of the bourgeoisie. He said that socialism could only be built in conditions of fierce class battles. It was wrong to imagine that these socialist gentlemen would present socialism to us on a platter. Lenin pointed out that in answer to the attempts of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie to destroy the rule of the working people, the Bolsheviks openly proclaimed civil war against the exploiters. This war was to defend the vital cause of the working people. In confirmation of this idea Vladimir Ilyich cited the following example.

"Permit me to relate an incident that occurred when I was in the carriage of a Finnish train and I overheard a conversation between several Finns and an old woman. I could not take part in the conversation because I cannot speak Finnish. But one of the Finns turned to me and said: 'Do you know the curious thing this old woman said? She said, 'Now there is no need to fear the man with the gun. I was in the woods one day and I met a man with a gun, and instead of taking the firewood I had collected from me, he added some more'."

"When I heard that, I said to myself: Let the hundreds of newspapers, no matter what

they call themselves—socialist, near-socialist, etc.—let hundreds of extremely loud voices shout at us, 'dictators,' 'violators,' and similar words. We know that another voice is now rising from among the people; they say to themselves: Now we need not be afraid of the man with the gun because he protects the working people and will be ruthless in suppressing the rule of the exploiters."<sup>1</sup>)

At the congress Lenin said that the Soviet system allowed workers and peasants full scope to reveal and develop their creative abilities and placed all technical achievements and cultural gains at their service.

The congress passed a law on the socialization of land, which was in essence a development of the "Decree on Land." The law confirmed that all land was the property of the state and that any other ownership of it was abolished for ever.

In assessing the importance of this law Lenin stressed that it helped unite the workers and peasants and that by means of this unity Soviet power would be able to overcome all obstacles in the way to socialism.

The merging of the Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with the Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies was an important political event.

The Third All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies opened on January 13 (26), 1918, at Smolny. Among the 422 peasant delegates, 113 were members of the Bolshevik party and 48 were sympathizers. At the very first meeting on the proposal of Y. M. Sverdlov, decision was taken to merge with the 3rd All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. In the evening the peasant delegates went from Smolny to the Taurida Palace. Delegates of the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers'

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 463.

Deputies warmly received the representatives from the many-million-strong peasantry. The moving demonstration of brotherly solidarity of workers, peasants and soldiers ended with the singing of the "Internationale."

Lenin said that Soviet power was marching as "a victorious triumphal procession." During the period from October 1917 to February 1918, Soviet rule spread over almost the whole of Russia.

The leading role in the socialist revolution was played by the central industrial regions of the country with their cities Petrograd and Moscow. Here was concentrated the most advanced, class-conscious, organized and united part of the proletariat and that part of it most closely linked with the working peasants.

Lenin wrote: "Capitals, or, in general, big commercial and industrial centres (here in Russia the two coincided, but they do not everywhere coincide) to a considerable degree decide the political fate of a nation, provided, of course, the centres are supported by sufficient local, *rural forces* (the italics are ours—*Authors*), even if that support does not come immediately."<sup>1</sup>)

The imperialist war, which continued after the victory of the October revolution, constituted a deadly danger to Soviet rule. Ever since the first day of its existence the Soviet Government has been waging an active struggle for peace. The Motherland and the revolution could be saved by winning a respite for the consolidation of Soviet rule and the building of a new workers' and peasants' army capable of defending the country.

An all-army congress for the demobilization of the old army was held in Petrograd from December 15 (28), 1917, to January 3 (16), 1918.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 258.

At the same time peace negotiations were conducted in Brest with Germany and her allies. Special questionnaires, drawn up by Lenin, about the attitude of the soldiers towards peace and the war were distributed among congress delegates.

"Is it to be feared," asked Lenin, "that the news of the peace negotiations having been broken off will result in widespread anarchist sentiments in the army and in desertions from the front, or may we be confident that the army will staunchly hold the front even after the receipt of such news?"

"Would our army be capable, from the military viewpoint, of resisting a German offensive, if it began on January 1? If not, when would our army be in a position to resist a German offensive?"<sup>1)</sup> Further there was a question of how the soldiers would regard the conclusion of a peace on annexation terms for Russia and whether they would declare for a revolutionary war.

After studying the questionnaires filled in by the delegates, Lenin came to the conclusion that the army would not be able to resist the onset of the German imperialists and that the soldiers would agree to the conclusion of peace on most burdensome terms. This conclusion was founded not only on the delegates' answers but also on numerous facts and reports received from the front. Heeding the voice of the masses and foreseeing ways of development of the revolution, Lenin in the name of saving the revolution did everything in his power to gain peace no matter how harsh the terms.

But some Communists, under a disguise of left phrases about defence of the interests of world revolution, demanded a continuation of the war, considering it possible in the name of the world re-

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 395.

volution to sacrifice Soviet rule, which in case of the conclusion of peace with Germany would, in their opinion, become purely formal. Trotsky, alleging that the Germans could not start an offensive, occupied a provocative position of "neither peace, nor war" which also was disastrous for the revolution.

Lenin stressed that in deciding the question of peace it was necessary to base oneself on the socio-economic and political situation in the country and on the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the population, i.e., the peasants. "The *muzhik* will not have a revolutionary war," said Lenin, "and will overthrow anyone who openly calls for one."<sup>1</sup>)

On February 24, 1918, the ARCEC on the basis of Lenin's report took the decision to conclude a peace on the terms dictated by the German imperialists. Under the peace treaty Soviet Russia lost the Baltic regions and part of Byelorussia to Germany and Kars, Ardagan and Batum—to Turkey. All these regions covered a territory of one million square kilometres with a population of 46 million. The peace treaty also contained some other very harsh terms.

On March 6, 1918, the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was called to consider the question of peace. This was the first party congress after the Great October Socialist Revolution. Since the Sixth Congress the membership of many party organizations had increased two or three times. Party organizations were being set up in the countryside. The authority of the Bolshevik party among the workers and peasants was growing from day to day. The report on peace was made by Lenin. By a majority of votes the Congress decided to ratify the peace treaty with Germany. This act

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 523.

convinced the peasants that the Communist Party led by Lenin was the mouthpiece of the thoughts and aspirations of the whole working people.

With the conclusion of the Brest peace the party achieved a respite, so necessary for the country, and made it possible for the broad masses to use the gains of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Every worker, soldier and peasant learned by experience that peace had become a fact and that the land had been transferred to the peasants. The workers and the peasants understood that they were becoming full masters in their country.

## TOWARDS A SOCIALIST ECONOMY

The conclusion of the Brest peace brought more favourable conditions for the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to set about building a socialist economy.

The organization of a socialist economy was one of the most difficult tasks Soviet power had to perform since it necessitated a radical change in the society's economic foundations. "...Only after it has been fulfilled (in the principal and main outlines)," wrote Lenin, "will it be possible to say that Russia *has become* not only a Soviet, but also a socialist, republic."<sup>1</sup>)

Lenin said that in Russia it was easier to start a revolution than to continue it. The Communist Party had to build the first ever socialist economy in a country with a predominantly peasant population amidst an ocean of isolated petty owners. Industry and agriculture were in dire straits. Many enterprises were brought to a standstill by their capitalist owners, others were idle due to lack of raw materials and fuel. In

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 243.

the towns there was a whole army of unemployed and an acute shortage of footwear, clothing, kerosene, matches and soap. In the countryside enormous tracts of arable land lay uncultivated owing to lack of agricultural machinery, draft animals, seeds and fertilizers. The international situation was extremely grave. The peace concluded with Germany was not stable. The Entente powers were openly preparing for military intervention in Soviet Russia.

In these difficult conditions Lenin elaborated a plan for laying the foundations of a socialist economy. In April 1918, he read at the plenum of the Central Committee of the party his "Theses on the Tasks of the Soviet Power at the Present Time." The Central Committee considered and approved these theses and decided to publish them in the press. Lenin's article "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" was published in "Pravda" and "Izvestiya." After that Lenin delivered a speech at the sitting of the ARCEC. He showed the importance of the new stage in the development of the socialist revolution and pointed to the leading role of the party in building a new society. He stressed that the Bolsheviks had convinced Russia of the correctness of their programme and tactics. They had won Russia from the rich for the poor, from the exploiters for the working people. The next task was to organize the administration of the country and develop a socialist economy. Lenin spoke of creating conditions in which the bourgeoisie could neither exist nor revive again.

In defining the tasks of building the foundations of a socialist economy, Lenin pointed to the need to carry out the following measures: introduce accounting and control over production and distribution of commodities; to practise the strictest economy in all branches of industry; to raise labour productivity; to raise the cultural

level of the population; to cultivate new, socialist discipline; promote socialist emulation and employ bourgeois specialists under the direction of Soviet power. Lenin stressed that these tasks had become the immediate and main slogans of the day.

Lenin's plan was given a hostile reception by the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The "Left" Communists and others also acted against the tasks set by Lenin. Flaunting their "super-revolutionary" sentiments, they accused Lenin of deviating from Marxism and capitulating to the bourgeoisie. But, in fact, they appeared on the side of petty-bourgeois anarchy and laxity which gave scope for the activities of profiteers, idlers and *kulaks*. Lenin devoted his work "Left-Wing Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality" to differences with "Left" Communists. This work contains a scientific analysis of the changes in the socio-economic life of the country and a theoretical substantiation of the party's policy in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Millions of petty proprietors in the towns and in the countryside did not recognize labour and state discipline, refused to submit to accounting and control, violated the grain monopoly and carried on speculation in an effort to enrich themselves on the famine and on the needs of the people. Petty-bourgeois anarchy was the main enemy of socialism in the country. The "Left" Communists did not understand this. Lenin wrote: "Either we subordinate the petty bourgeoisie to our control and accounting (we can do this if we organize the poor, that is, the majority of the population or semi-proletarians, around the politically conscious proletarian vanguard), or they will overthrow our workers' power as surely and as inevitably as the revolution was overthrown by the Napoleons and Cavaignacs who



sprang from this very soil of petty proprietorship."<sup>1)</sup>

Lenin pointed out that we had lacked culture, flexibility and the habit of compromising with the "cultural capitalists" who accepted state capitalism and were able to put it into practice. They had been capable and experienced organizers of very big enterprises able to supply tens of millions of people with goods.

A compromise of this kind was concluded with the old bourgeois cooperative system. Soviet power fully preserved the former cooperative network, its organizational structure and material resources. The party set the task of bringing a socialist content into the cooperative system, clearing it of hostile elements and widening its economic and political functions. Already then Lenin pointed out that after conquest of state power by the proletariat the role of cooperative organizations was essentially changing.

According to Lenin, the unification of the whole population into consumer cooperative societies was to facilitate the transition to mass accounting and control over the distribution of goods. At the same time cooperation was becoming very important for the socialist socialization of production. "The cooperative, as a small island in capitalist society," Lenin pointed out, "is a little shop. The cooperative, if it embraces the whole of society, in which the land is socialized and the factories nationalized, is socialism."<sup>2)</sup>

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government took steps to create large-scale mechanized agricultural farms based on the collective mode of production.

On December 4 (17), 1917, the Council of People's Commissars considered a draft decree

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 337.

<sup>2)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, pp. 215—216.

"On the Requisition of Agricultural Machines and Implements." Lenin proposed an amendment to this draft which stated that the machines remained the property of the state. The *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and the *volost* land committees could be in charge of them and must carefully guard the people's property. They must see that the machines did not serve as a means of enriching the *kulaks* and that only the working masses should use them to cultivate their land.

It was stated in the "Decree on Land" and in the Law on Socialization of Land that in order to speed up the realization of socialism the Soviet Republic would render all manner of assistance and material help for the common cultivation of land giving preference to labour communist, *artel* and cooperative farms over individual farms.

To stimulate the development of socialist agriculture the Council of People's Commissars in July 1918, allocated 10 million roubles to the People's Commissariat for Agriculture to be spent on organizing agricultural communes and granting loans and allowances to the communes.

The measures of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government for the socialist transformation of agriculture found support among the working people. Many *uyezd* and provincial land departments reported on the organization of collective farms. In a number of rules worked out by the communes and *artels* it was stated that every member of the association must engage in some kind of work in accordance with the principle "All are responsible for everyone, and everyone is responsible for all," and wage a struggle against drunkenness and a dishonest attitude towards work.

In a number of talks and speeches Vladimir Ilyich stressed that advanced proletarians must

come to the villages as leaders of the poor, as organizers and leaders of the working peasants in the building of a new life. At the beginning of 1918, workers' representatives were sent on Lenin's instructions to the countryside to organize workshops for the repair of seeding machines, ploughs and threshers.

In January 1918, a workers' delegation from the Obukhov plant told Lenin about their cherished dream to move to new lands in the Altai region and set up model farms, build workshops and organize the repair of agricultural machines and implements for the peasants.

Under Lenin's instructions a special train was placed at the disposal of workers departing for Siberia.

In Altai workers from the Obukhov and Semyannikov plants organized a society of Communard farmers. Workers from the Okhta plant set up the "Solnechnaya" commune. Concerning the initiative of these workers, Lenin wrote to the People's Commissar of Agriculture: "This is a splendid start, support it by all means. Lenin."

At the end of 1918 there were 1,579 collective farms and 3,101 state farms in the country. Lenin said then that life had set before the peasants the question of going over to cultivation of land in common and that "it is impossible to live in the old way, in the way we lived before the war, and the waste of human toil and effort associated with individual small-scale peasant farming cannot continue."<sup>1</sup>)

Collectivization began in conditions of economic disruption, acute class struggle, the absence of experience and prerequisites for the mass organization of collective farms. The peasants had to test in practice and compare dif-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 343.

ferent forms of organization of labour and apply different principles of distribution of produce.

The first agrarian transformations in the Soviet state brought to life shoots of socialism in the countryside, but small-scale commodity production remained for a number of years. Many millions of peasants worked as before on their small individual farms.

At the beginning of July 1918, the Fifth All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and Cossacks' Deputies was held to sum up the results of the activities of Soviet power for eight months and determine new tasks.

In his report on the domestic situation, Lenin pointed out that during three and a half months of peaceful respite, the workers and peasants had done so much that it was possible to say that the times of book disputes about socialist programmes had passed never to return. Now millions of workers and peasants were engaged in socialist construction and "every month of such work and such experience is worth ten, if not twenty, years of our history."<sup>1</sup>)

In summing up the experience of socialist construction he stated with pride that fruitful work, despite enormous difficulties, had produced outstanding results: socialism had gone over from the domain of theory to the field of active practical work. But matters had been aggravated by the difficult food position and general disorganization of the economy. And only the closest alliance between the village poor and the mass of the working peasants could save the revolution.

The debates at the Congress reflected the sharp class struggle which was going on, above all, in the countryside. "Here the class struggle," said Lenin, "has reached its deepest source. There

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 515.

is not a village left where the class struggle is not raging between a miserable handful of *kulaks* on the one hand and the vast labouring majority—the poor and those middle peasants who have no grain surpluses, who have consumed them long ago, and who did not go in for profiteering—on the other.”<sup>1)</sup>

The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, expressing the interests of the *kulaks*, furiously opposed at the congress the food dictatorship of the proletariat, the food-procuring detachments and committees of the peasant poor, that is, everything that was directed at curbing the *kulaks* and undermining their economic foundations and influence among the peasants. However, their attempts to discredit the activity of the Communist Party in the countryside failed. The congress approved the Government’s foreign and internal policy and adopted the Constitution of the RSFSR. “What the Soviet Constitution gives us,” said Lenin, “no other state has been able to give in two hundred years.”<sup>2)</sup>

But soon the open military intervention of England, France, the USA and Japan forced the people to take up arms. The war and the foreign intervention sharply changed the trend of the party’s economic policy in the countryside. As a forced measure, War Communism was introduced. Instead of administrative and economic measures for curbing petty-bourgeois anarchy, Soviet power was compelled to take measures of revolutionary non-economic compulsion.

#### FIGHT AGAINST FAMINE

On May 9, 1918, the Council of People’s Commissars announced: “Petrograd is in an unprecedentedly catastrophic situation. There is no

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 27.

<sup>2)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 511.

bread. The population is receiving the last of the potato flour and dried bread. The red capital is on the verge of ruin from starvation." The grave food situation resulted from the general economic disorganization caused by the imperialist war. But there were also other reasons. The more prosperous peasants, having accumulated large stocks of grain, refused to deliver it to the Soviet authorities. The *kulaks* united with the foreign counter-revolution and started mutinies into which they tried to draw the middle peasants.

The Russian counter-revolutionaries, supported by British, American, French and other imperialists, were making an all-out attempt to overthrow Soviet rule. They organized acts of terrorism against party and government leaders. On the 30th of August, 1918, a foul attempt was made on Lenin's life. The *kulaks* together with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and White-Guard officers broke up the committees of the poor, killed Communists, Soviet workers and peasant activists and plundered government warehouses.

These counter-revolutionary acts aroused general indignation. The working people demanded that the terrorists and counter-revolutionaries be ruthlessly dealt with.

In a letter to Klara Zetkin Lenin described the situation: "We here are now living through perhaps the most difficult weeks of the whole revolution. The class struggle and the civil war have penetrated deep among the population: everywhere there is a split in the villages—the poor are for us, the *kulaks* are furiously against us. The Entente... the bourgeoisie is making every effort to overthrow us."<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 35, p. 343.

Lenin was convinced that the working class would defeat the enemies of the revolution provided it had the support of the majority of the peasants. The Communist Party and the Soviet Government were faced with the urgent task of strengthening further the alliance of the working class and the poorest peasants. Vladimir Ilyich stressed that only on the basis of such an alliance was it possible to defend Soviet rule, to repulse the onslaught of the interventionists and the White Guards and save the working people from famine and enslavement by the imperialists.

In an article under the heading "Comrade Workers, Forward to the Last, Decisive Fight!" Lenin wrote: "The *kulaks* are rabid foes of the Soviet Government. Either the *kulaks* massacre vast numbers of workers, or the workers ruthlessly suppress the revolts of the predatory *kulak* minority of the people against the working people's government. There can be no middle course. Peace is out of the question: even if they have quarrelled, the *kulak* can easily come to terms with the landowner, the tsar and the priest, but with the working class never."<sup>1)</sup>

The party and Government fought resolutely against subversive *kulak* acts and profiteering. Lenin pointed out that the struggle for grain was a struggle for socialism.

In May 1918, the ARCEC and the Council of People's Commissars passed a decree giving emergency powers to the People's Commissar for Food in the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the countryside. Those who were hoarding grain and tried to profit by it were declared enemies of the people and were to be tried by a revolutionary tribunal.

In June 1918, a decree was passed, on Lenin's initiative, on the organization of poor peasants'

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 56.

committees. The committees were to distribute grain, prime necessities and agricultural implements and assist the local food organizations in confiscating surplus products from the *kulaks* and other rich peasants. The poor peasants' committees played a decisive role in the distribution of the land and implements confiscated from the landowners. Fifty million hectares taken from the *kulaks* were divided among the poor and middle peasants. The committees gave considerable help to the authorities in getting recruits for the Red Army from among the peasant population, were the first to go over to socialist agriculture, organized agricultural communes and artels.

The Communist Party and the working class sent their best representatives to the food front because it was there that the fate of the revolution was being decided. They procured food and helped the poor peasants fight the *kulaks* who were hiding grain from the state.

In May 1918, Lenin addressed Petrograd workers who were leaving for the food front: "Comrades, workers, remember that the revolution is in a critical situation! Remember that you alone can save the revolution, nobody else can."<sup>1</sup>)

From July 1918, to March 1919 more than 40 thousand foremost workers went to the countryside. In September-October 1918, more than 29 million poods (1 pood = 16.38 kgs) of grain was procured. The hopes of the foreign imperialists and internal counter-revolution of strangling Soviet rule with the bony hand of famine failed.

The food detachments gave part of the collected grain to the poor peasants. This was of great

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 390.



importance in strengthening the alliance of the working class and the poorest peasants and Soviet rule in the countryside. Speaking at a meeting in the Sokolniki club on June 21, 1918, Lenin said: "When I read a report to the effect that in Usman *uyezd*, Tambov *gubernia*, a food detachment turned over to the poor peasants 3,000 of the 6,000 poods of grain it had requisitioned, I declare that even if you were to prove to me that to this day there has been only one such detachment in Russia, I should still say that the Soviet Government is doing its job. For in no other country in the world will you find such a detachment!"<sup>1)</sup> The food detachments helped the poor peasants to overcome the resistance of the *kulaks*.

On arrival in the villages, the town workers organized communist cells. In September 1918, the Central Committee sent a letter to party organizations instructing them to strengthen Bolshevik influence among the toiling peasants and expand the network of rural party organizations. Members of the Poor Peasants' Committees were the first to join the party. The number of rural communist cells increased from 203 in 1917 to 2,304 in 1918, i.e., 11 times.

The workers' food detachments and the Poor Peasants' Committees dealt the *kulaks* a crushing blow and strengthened Soviet rule in the countryside.

These committees successfully accomplished their tasks. In November 1918, by decision of the Sixth Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of the Soviets, the Poor Peasants' Committees merged with the rural Soviets. Soviet rule was firmly established in the countryside.

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 453.

## ALLIANCE WITH THE MIDDLE PEASANTS STRENGTHENED

As is known, during the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution the working class acted in union with the whole peasantry who were vitally interested in doing away with landed proprietorship and other remnants of serfdom and in gaining democratic freedom. This strategic slogan of the party in the main exhausted itself during the 1917 February revolution when the principal strategic task—the overthrow of tsarism—was accomplished.

During the socialist revolution, when the task was the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the party put forward the slogan: alliance of the working class with the poorest peasants against the urban and rural bourgeoisie with the neutralization of the middle peasants. for the power of the proletariat. The village poor were the natural ally of the proletariat and the socialist revolution because they were as cruelly exploited as the town proletariat. The middle peasants, owing to their dual role (on the one hand, they were toilers, on the other—proprietors), wavered between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and took a wait-and-see position. Therefore the party's policy of trying to neutralize the middle peasants, in order at least to prevent their going over to the side of the bourgeoisie, was the only correct line during the second stage of the revolution.

The Soviet Government took a number of measures to encourage the middle peasants to go over to the side of Soviet power. Manufactured goods were sent to the countryside in exchange for grain. As Lenin proposed, the Council of People's Commissars introduced obligatory natural exchange of commodities in the rural grain

districts. Before the harvesting and grain-procurement campaign of 1918 a decision was taken to increase fixed grain prices threefold. These Communist Party and Soviet Government measures accorded with the objective course of the development of the socialist revolution. Owing to the economic influence and intensive explanatory work among the broad labouring masses of the peasants, the middle peasants, who were wavering between the revolution and counter-revolution, turned to the side of Soviet power. In August 1918, Lenin wrote: "The class-conscious workers' programme is the closest alliance and complete unity with the poor peasants; concessions to and agreement with the middle peasants; ruthless suppression of the *kulaks*, those bloodsuckers, vampires, plunderers of the people and profiteers, who batten on famine."<sup>1</sup>)

Thus the second strategic slogan of the party was effective for about two years and only exhausted itself at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919. The party Programme adopted at the Eighth Congress formulated the third slogan on the peasant question: reliance on the poor peasants, alliance with the middle peasants and a resolute struggle against the *kulaks*.

Lenin pointed out that the middle peasants turned to the side of Soviet power because of the following facts.

First, Red Army successes in the fight against the interventionists and White Guards;

Second, the revolution in Germany and other European countries;

Third, the behaviour of the interventionists and White Guards in the areas they temporarily occupied. The peasants of the Volga region, the Urals and other places where counter-revolution temporarily gained power showed them

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 58.

that the White Guards and Socialist-Revolutionaries were restoring the hated old order, returning the factories and plants to the capitalists and the land—to the landowners;

Fourth, the correct policy employed by the Communist Party and the town workers in the countryside.

The party, of course, understood that the middle peasants' indecision had not yet ceased, that owing to their economic position they could not help wavering and would long continue to waver, but if a correct policy is pursued they would eventually take the side of Soviet power.

Vladimir Ilyich attached great importance to implementing the party line with regard to the middle peasants skilfully. He insisted that their requests be given the most careful attention and that there should be no arbitrary acts on the part of the local authorities. He pointed out that to confuse the middle peasants with the *kulaks* and apply the same measures to them would be most grossly to violate not only all Soviet decrees and policy but also all the principles of communism. The Soviet state must give extensive help to the labouring peasants, supplying them with manufactured goods produced by the town industries and particularly with agricultural machines and seeds, grant them certain privileges and at the same time suppress any arbitrary requisitions that would stir up discontent among them.

When, in a number of places, the Poor Peasants' Committees began to oppose the middle peasants, putting them on the same footing as the *kulaks*, the party took urgent measures to eradicate these mistakes. On August 17, 1918, a telegram "On the alliance of the peasants and the workers," signed by V. I. Lenin and A. D. Tsuryupa, was sent to all provincial Soviets of Deputies and food commissars. It stated that

the Soviet Government had never struggled against the middle peasants; that its aim was to unite the town proletarians with the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians as well as with working peasants who were fairly well off and did not exploit anyone. "The alliance of the workers and the peasants," the telegram stressed, "defeated the landowners and the bourgeoisie in October last. This alliance, and nothing else will secure the land for the peasants, the factories and plants for the workers and will strengthen the rule of the workers and the peasants. The alliance of the workers and the peasants will ultimately bring about the triumph of socialism."<sup>1</sup>)

By the end of 1918 not only political changes but also important economic ones had taken place in the countryside. More than a half of the former poor peasants had risen to the level of middle peasants. The middle peasant became the central figure in the village.

Considering that small-scale peasant farming would exist for a long time to come and striving to raise its productivity, the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party made proposals to regulate the peasants' land tenure, supply the peasants with high-quality seeds and artificial fertilizers, improve breeds of stock, disseminate agricultural knowledge, help the peasants improve their farming methods, carry out the repair of agricultural implements in Soviet workshops, set up tractor stations, experimental stations and do land reclamation work.

Lenin emphasized that only if such things were done would the peasants be won to the Soviet side. "If tomorrow," he said, "we could supply one hundred thousand first-class tractors, provide them with fuel, provide them with dri-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Sel. Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 144.

vers—you know very well that this at present is sheer fantasy—the middle peasant would say, 'I am for the communia' (i.e., for communism)."<sup>1)</sup>

On Lenin's instructions thousands of Communists and foremost workers were sent to help the local party and Soviet organizations explain the essence of the decisions of the party congress. Lenin's report "On Work in the Countryside" and the decisions taken by the congress were published in large editions. The central newspapers "Pravda," "Izvestiya" and "Bednota" gave wide publicity to the materials on the work and the results of the congress.

A special propaganda train "Oktyabrskaya Revolutsiya" (The October Revolution), directed by M. I. Kalinin, Chairman of the ARCEC, visited many regions of the country. In his speeches Kalinin stressed the need to strengthen in every possible way the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose most important principle was the alliance of the working class and the peasants, an alliance in which the guiding role was taken by the working class. He explained that the workers and the peasants had the same interests and that only in close alliance they would be able to defeat the interventionists and White Guards.

In April 1919, the ARCEC on Lenin's initiative issued a number of decrees granting certain concessions to the middle peasants: "On Privileges to Middle Peasants in Recovering the Extraordinary Revolutionary Tax," "On Benefits in Recovering the Tax in Kind," "On Measures to Assist the Handicraft Industry." According to the last decree, the peasants could have their own workshops and assistants and sell the goods they produced as they saw fit. The

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 29, p. 214.

giving of this right to handicraftsmen was intended to stimulate the economic initiative of the middle peasants and lift labour productivity.

The government took steps to satisfy the demand for different goods in the countryside. The party worked out concrete measures to improve the dissemination of communist propaganda and raise the general educational level in the villages. Thousands of schools, village reading rooms and libraries were opened in a drive to wipe out illiteracy. Tens of thousands of townspeople were sent to the villages as teachers. During the first years of Soviet rule (including 1920) about 7 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom were peasants, were taught to read and write.

The correct policy pursued by the Communist Party and the great deal of organizational work done in the countryside, as well as state material and moral assistance to the labouring peasant masses played a decisive role in strengthening the military and political alliance of the working class and the peasants during the civil war years.

## EVERYTHING FOR VICTORY

The Red Army and the people had to strain every nerve in their fight against the interventionists and internal enemies.

When delegations of peasants came to Lenin he called upon them to unite still closer with the working class in the struggle against the interventionists and White Guards. The delegates elated at Lenin's support called upon the people to rise and defend the gains of the October revolution.

Thus, for example, Ivan Afanasievich Chekunov, an intelligent and original propagandist, after visiting Lenin with a group of peasants,

published two articles in the newspaper "Bednota." He wrote: "Save yourself and your children from everlasting bondage and, before it is too late, send more of your sons and grandsons with firm orders to drive away the White gangs."

A patriotic movement swept the country for the mobilizing of peasants for the Red Army. At a meeting in the village of Batyushkovo of the Krasnokutsk *volost* in the Samara province, peasants passed the following resolution: "We call upon all poor people to join the ranks of the Red Army in order to achieve the ideal of all the working people—socialism."

To defeat internal and foreign counter-revolution, the Soviet state had to take a number of extraordinary measures which, taken as a whole, are known as the policy of War Communism.

The policy of War Communism worked out by Lenin was a forced measure aimed at strengthening the military and political alliance of the working class and peasants. Only such an alliance could defend the Soviet Republic against its domestic and foreign enemies.

All large-scale, medium and small industrial enterprises were nationalized. Most operating enterprises were switched over to the production of war materiel. But food supplies remained one of the most difficult problems.

At the end of 1918 the territory of the Soviet Republic consisted of 25 *gubernias* (provinces) of which 17 had to bring in grain. The White Guards and the interventionists plundered and devastated the areas which they had overrun. Supplies of food to the army and townspeople were endangered.

The Soviet Government introduced a grain monopoly and a rationing system and all trading enterprises in the country were nationalized.



On January 11, 1919, the Council of People's Commissars passed a decree, signed by Lenin, on the appropriation of surplus food products. The surplus-appropriation system affected the farms in the producing provinces which had surpluses. The peasants were left enough grain for subsistence, for sowing and cattle feed. The rest was taken from them at fixed prices. In the actual carrying out of the policy of War Communism not only surpluses but also part of the produce the peasants needed themselves was taken from them. Rapidly devalued paper money was used as payment in most cases.

The depreciation in the volume of money was hastened by the extreme shrinkage in market turnover, most goods not being sold but distributed by the state free of charge, or else, a direct exchange of commodities was effected between town and country, etc.

Of course, the surplus-appropriation system could not create any incentive for the peasants to increase production for it was not a normal form of relationship between town and country. A forced measure dictated by the war, want and famine, it was aimed at supplying the army with bread and saving from starvation the main productive force—the workers. This it did do.

The military and political alliance of the working class and the peasants had also a certain economic basis. "This alliance," Lenin pointed out, "was something entirely new and did not rest on the ordinary relations between commodity producers and consumers... The peasants gave their produce to the Red Army and received from the latter assistance in protecting their possessions."<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 487.

## WITH THE WORKERS TO SOCIALISM

At the time many discussions were taking place on the forms of socialist transformation of agriculture.

Lenin's answer was that it should proceed in the following two directions: first, by organizing state farms on land owned by the whole people and second, by setting up collective farms—*kolkhozes* on land that was the commonly-owned property of a particular collective of peasants which would be developed with the all-round material, financial and organizational help of the proletarian state. Though there are certain differences between state farms and collective farms, they have a common trait—they are both farms of a socialist type.

These basic propositions of Lenin became the programme for the whole period of struggle for the socialist transformation of agriculture.

At the first congress of agricultural workers of the Petrograd province in March 1919, Lenin pointed out that Soviet farms were organized in order to produce more, better and cheaper commodities than before. He instructed state farms to give all-round help to the neighbouring peasants.

At the Eighth All-Russia Conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Lenin put forward the following important proposition on the role and significance of the state farms: "Insofar as Comrade Rakovsky's speech (a prominent Soviet statesman—*Authors*) is concerned, I must say that when he said that state farms must be the basis of our communist construction he was wrong. Under no circumstances can we organize our affairs in that way. We must accept the fact that we should convert only a very small part of the progressive farms into state farms, otherwise we shall not effect a bloc

with the petty peasants—and we need that bloc.”<sup>1)</sup> On this question Lenin proceeded from the highest principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat—from the need to strengthen the alliance between the working class and the peasants.

Most state farms were set up in regions where landowners’ and private estates had been numerous. On an average, state farms were allotted about 500 hectares. At the time these were regarded as rather big enterprises.

The first collective farms appeared in 1917, being set up on equal terms with the state farms, and received material resources at their disposal.

By March 1919, 1,692 communes and 601 artels in 34 provinces of the Soviet Republic had registered with the Central Bureau of Communes.

The Communist Party had by force of example and much explanation to convince the peasants, that it was correct to organize collective farms and that they offered many advantages.

In 1918-1919, on Lenin’s initiative, a number of measures were taken to extend and strengthen the collective farms. A decree was issued on setting up a special fund of one thousand million roubles to provide loans and grants to be used to improve agriculture.

While assisting the peasants in every way to take the new socialist road, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government warned members of communes and artels against parasitism and drew attention to the need to find inner reserves for improving the collective farm.

Reports about the setting up of collective farms came in from everywhere.

In the Vitebsk province the number of communes and artels grew in three years of Soviet rule more than 12 times (in 1918—36; in 1919—334, and in 1920—429).

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 193.

In 9 Ukrainian provinces there were 497 communes and artels at that time.

Lenin rejoiced at this success and was convinced that socialist relations of production were triumphing in the countryside. In 1919 he said that he was sure that "we shall bring about a situation when each of the several thousand existing communes and artels will become a genuine nursery for communist ideas and views among the peasants, a practical example showing them that, although it is still a small and feeble growth, it is nevertheless not an artificial, hothouse growth but a true growth of the new socialist system."<sup>1</sup>)

In the conditions of famine, disorganization and civil war the agricultural communes played a positive role. But even then Vladimir Ilyich pointed out that they displayed consumers' and dependents' tendencies, shortcomings which impeded their development and a rise in labour productivity.

During the organization of collectivization it was found that the communes in which all the means of production, including the peasants' personal property, were socialized and material benefits were distributed on an equitable principle, were not as well understood by the labouring peasants as other, simpler forms of cooperation. The communes began to be superseded by the artel in which the principal means of production are socialized but the peasant retains his personal auxiliary farm, and payment is made according to work done on the artel.

In summing up the experience of setting up communes, Lenin stressed that they were voluntary unions of farmers for the purpose of organizing large-scale socialist farms. Their very name was linked with the idea of "communism," which im-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 204.

posed a great responsibility on them to be well managed.

Lenin insisted that a circumspect approach be taken to the building of different forms of collective farms and that there be due regard for the actual conditions; he repeatedly warned against "leftist" haste in this highly important matter.

Speaking of the support given by the state for socialist forms of economy, Lenin pointed to the need to be particularly careful not to allow any form of compulsion. Long educational work was required for officials working in the countryside to know the rural economy, to study the life of the peasants and to learn from the peasants before teaching them.

The socialist reconstruction of agriculture during the first years of Soviet rule should be regarded as an important socio-economic experiment conducted for the first time in mankind's history. It proved of great importance for the subsequent mass-scale collectivization of agriculture.

## A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

When the Civil War ended the Soviet state set about the tasks of rehabilitation and development of the national economy and the elaboration of a single national economic plan based on the electrification of the whole country.

Lenin regarded large-scale and heavy industry as the key to socialist reconstruction of agriculture, the main condition for pulling out the economic roots of capitalism in the countryside. He wrote: "We say: large-scale industry is the only means of saving the peasantry from want and starvation. Everyone agrees with this. But how can it be done? The restoration of industry

on the old basis will entail too much labour and time. We must give industry a more modern form, i.e., we must adopt electrification.”<sup>1)</sup> In 1920, at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets Lenin proposed a grandiose plan for building the economic basis of socialism and called it “the second programme of the party.” He advanced the famous slogan: “Communism is Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country.”

The GOELRO plan (the plan of the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia) which the congress adopted determined the main directions in which the national economy would develop in the coming 10—15 years. Based on supply of electricity to the most important economic regions, the plan provided, in the first instance, for the building of key branches of heavy industry, and then for radical socialist reconstruction of farming on the basis of the development of socialized forms of production and the equipment of agriculture with up-to-date machinery. The plan went on to state that the Soviet Government would have systematically to influence the peasants and improve conditions of production while gradually leading the peasants to higher and higher types of socialization of agricultural labour and to a high level of agricultural technology.

The GOELRO plan was broad and bold in the tasks it set in the mechanization and electrification of agriculture and contained an elaborate system of measures for eliminating the lag in the country's needs in this most important economic branch. It provided for the opening up of new lands with the help of tractors and other modern machinery; the establishment of state farms and cooperative suburban farms equipped with modern machines and implements;

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 493.

the elimination of the three-field system and strip farming; introduction of correct crop rotations; the large-scale introduction of the achievements of agronomy and animal husbandry and the massive use of chemicals in agriculture.

The plan stated that electricity played an equally important role in the production of different artificial fertilizers and that only cheap electric power could make it possible by various means to utilize nitrogen in the air for evolving new substitutes of Chilean saltpetre.

These were bold plans. The Russian writer M. Gorky aptly observed that Lenin was looking from the present into the future. Lenin was well aware of the potentialities of liberated people, believed in their strength and talents and foresaw that where formerly there had been a wilderness electricity would bring the working people joy and happiness.

Those who opposed Lenin's plan for the electrification of Russia and did not believe in the people's ability tried to frustrate the practical implementation of the plan for socialist construction.

They put forward an alternate plan for economic revival based not on electrification but on backward technology. Trotsky proposed relying "on the muscular strength of the workers" and not on technical progress. In criticizing the GOELRO plan he referred to the "extremely high cost" of building power stations and said the peasant population of Russia were not ready for them. Lenin stated explicitly that Trotsky was against the GOELRO plan and that he opposed the idea of electrification in general.

The Trotskyites proposed relying entirely on imported equipment for the power stations. They considered that the development of the

country's own power engineering would take at least one hundred years. Some of them demagogically declared that the required equipment should be taken from heavy industry plants which were to be closed down. This was essentially capitulation disguised under left phrases. Rykov and his adherents sought to substitute an "electrical concoction" for the main idea of the GOELRO plan. Instead of 30 big power stations they proposed building numerous rural power stations asserting that "the future belonged only to petty electrification."

Rykov's idea was basically unsound since it proceeded from conditions of disunited individual farming and backward industry and did not take into account the development of the economy on a socialist basis. Lenin and the Eighth Congress of the Soviets, which adopted the GOELRO plan, did not reject the idea of building small power stations as a preparation for building big power stations.

Some opponents of the GOELRO plan suggested placing the construction of power stations in the hands of foreign capitalists on concession terms. Lenin flatly opposed granting concessions on such a key industry as power generation. In his article "An Integrated Economic Plan" he sharply reproved all opponents of the GOELRO plan and showed that the plan for the electrification of the RSFSR was "the only serious work on the subject"<sup>1)</sup> and that all attempts to belittle it or confuse it as well as all Trotsky's variants were "empty talk and word-spinning, a refusal to consider and look into what had been done in this field." Lenin outlined the GOELRO plan in detail and proposed that it should not be discussed in a general way but a careful study should be made to imple-

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 137.



ment it, that "the mistakes in this practical business and ways of correcting them"<sup>1)</sup> be dealt with.

Lenin taught that to overcome the economic dislocation, implement the electrification plan and reconstruct the economy on socialist lines, it was necessary to draw the working masses into the building of a new life.

The first measures in the electrification plan were difficult to execute. There was a shortage of equipment, building materials, foodstuffs, skilled workers, engineers and technicians. Lenin demanded that all possibilities and reserves be used in implementing the plan. He watched with interest the course of construction of power stations and assisted in providing them in good time with the necessary equipment and materials.

The rates of electrification grew from year to year. Old power stations were restored and new ones put into operation.

"On November 14, electric light will be switched on in the village of Kashino," the peasants wrote to Lenin in 1920. "We invite you to come and share with us the joy we feel at the sight of electric light in peasants' huts, of which we did not dare to think under the tsars. Your presence is very desirable."

Putting aside all his affairs, Lenin accompanied by N. K. Krupskaya went to the village of Kashino near Moscow to attend the opening of the small power station.

During the meeting, Lenin spoke of the international situation, the restoration of the national economy and the importance of electrification.

In a speech, one of the peasants said that Soviet rule had made it possible for the peasants

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 137.

to have "unnatural light" in their huts and this would lighten their darkness. Lenin enjoyed his speech very much and with all his heart welcomed this new event in the life of the countryside. Recalling this at the Eighth All-Russia Congress of the Soviets, he said: "For my part, these words did not surprise me. Of course, to the non-party peasant masses electric light is an 'unnatural' light; but what we consider unnatural is that the peasants and workers should have lived for hundreds and thousands of years in such backwardness, poverty and oppression under the yoke of the landowners and the capitalists."<sup>1</sup>)

Lenin visited one of the houses where he was given a very hearty welcome, after which he sat down with his hosts to a simple meal. The peasants told him how they had built the station and what difficulties they had had to overcome. He went deep into all questions, was interested in all details and astonished them with the aptness of his questions and his straightforward opinions.

In 1918-1919, on the initiative of communist organizations and the local Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, rural power stations were built in many villages near Moscow.

In a number of places peasants of several villages pooled their efforts to build them. Beginning in 1920, the peasants of eight villages of the Kotyakov *volost* in the Kostroma province spent a year building one. It supplied power to all eight villages.

Electrification of agriculture made only modest headway in the first years of Soviet rule. In 1921, 105 electric-power stations were equipped and put into operation in the countryside and small towns. But they were sufficient for Lenin

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 517.

to conclude that the days of manual labour would end in Soviet Russia, that the primitive wooden plough and spinning-wheel would vanish and the country would march forward along the road of technical progress.

### **BASING HIMSELF ON CONCRETE ANALYSIS**

Enormous difficulties had to be faced during the transition from war to peaceful construction. Class enemies tried to use the serious economic position to undermine Soviet rule.

To consolidate the gains of the revolution and develop the national economy were the tasks confronting the party. A new policy had to be evolved for the country's economy. It was necessary, above all, to improve agricultural output, without which the army, the workers and peasants could not exist.

In the new conditions the alliance of the workers and the peasants acquired particular importance. The Communist Party considered that the successful rehabilitation of the national economy and, first of all, of agriculture could be accomplished only by drawing the middle peasants into active participation in the nation's economic revival. In his pamphlet "The Tax in Kind" Lenin wrote: "The pivot and touchstone will now be an increase in products... the 'stake' on the middle peasant in agriculture."<sup>1</sup>) To draw the middle peasants into active participation in socialist construction it was necessary for them to have a material interest in it.

Lenin considered that for this purpose the economic union between the working class and the peasants must be strengthened by developing trade between town and country, that being

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin, *Coll Works*, Vol. 32, p. 323.

the only way to ensure the wide development of commodity circulation between industry and agriculture.

During the period of transition from the surplus-appropriation system to the tax in kind Lenin frequently talked with peasant delegates, carefully studied letters from peasants and visited different villages. In December 1920, he took part in a conference of non-party peasants—delegates to the Eighth All-Russia Congress of the Soviets, listened to the heated debates on the most vital problems of peasant life and wrote down the speeches of 29 non-party peasants.

In the winter of 1920 Lenin went shooting near the village of Modenovo of the Vereiski *uyezd* in the Moscow province. On learning this, the local peasants sent a messenger to Lenin with the following note: "To the leader of world revolution Comrade Lenin on behalf of the citizens of the village of Modenovo. We ask you to come and talk with us."

The talk took place in the house of P. A. Kochetova. The peasants put various questions to Vladimir Ilyich, told him what they needed and asked him to reduce the rate of surplus appropriation of hay. Lenin suggested that they send a special delegate to the Kremlin to talk about what concerned them and make their requests. On January 6, 1921, Lenin received the delegate and talked with him.

On the evening of January 9, Lenin went to the village of Gorki to talk with the peasants. This is what someone who was present reported: "Lenin entered the cottage and began to talk with the peasants. At first they put questions—vital, comradely and jocular. Vladimir Ilyich laughed and so did the *muzhiks*. We joked for about half an hour and soon exhausted stories about anti-profitier detachments, profiteers who

carried flour and groats under their coats and who managed to ride on the roofs of railway cars and under them as well as by horse in a roundabout way to Moscow. Ilyich laughed at these stories which were useful to him as material. After that he rose and began to tell the peasants in simple terms about the new economic policy.

"The peasants listened with great attention. They did so because they saw that this man was giving them a new future, a bright life."<sup>1)</sup>

Lenin visited more than 30 villages in the Moscow province. He talked with the peasants and delivered addresses at Yaropolets, Baulino and other places.

Lenin went into all the details of peasant economy and helped the peasants in a practical way. Thus, in a "Note to Narkomprod" (the People's Commissariat for Food) he wrote:

"Stavropol peasants (who have brought grain for the children) complain that the cooperative shops do not issue

axle-grease (they keep it in the warehouse)  
matches  
and other goods.

They did not issue the herrings but let them go rotten.

There is terrible discontent. The provincial food commissar says—first deliver all appropriations and then we will give.

They insist that it is necessary to give immediately.

The appropriation quantity of 27 million poods is excessive, and seeds are taken. They say, there is bound to be insufficient to sow.

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<sup>1)</sup> *Workers' Stories about Lenin*. Moscow, 1934, p. 105.

I ask you to urgently examine this, particularly the first clause, and give me your opinion not later than tomorrow.

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars  
V. Ulyanov (Lenin)"<sup>1)</sup>

On February 2, 1921, Lenin received V. N. Sokolov, a member of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, with whom he discussed the position of the Siberian peasants in detail. Immediately after talking with Sokolov Lenin examined the draft resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On the Agrarian and Food Policy in Siberia."

Watching the situation which developed in the Siberian countryside after the introduction of the surplus-appropriation system, Sokolov concluded that a new approach was needed towards the Siberian peasants.

"Ilyich more listened than made remarks," writes Sokolov. "He listened very attentively, outwardly calm. Narrowing one eye he looked at me and from time to time, ejaculated an 'h'm,' 'well,well.' Sometimes he put leading questions to me."

When Sokolov had explained the essence of his proposals for changing the forms of surplus-appropriation, Lenin said:

"And you think, don't you, that in this it is possible to confine oneself to Siberia?"

"No, Vladimir Ilyich. Siberia is the beginning, an approach, an experiment."

Lenin also asked:

"Do you think that if it is announced in good time, they will sow more?"

"Of course, they will, their economic instinct will prompt them to."

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Sel. Works*, Vol. XXXV, p. 159.

The next day Sokolov's proposals were discussed at a sitting of the collegium of the Peoples' Commissariat of Agriculture.

Before leaving Moscow Sokolov met a Siberian peasant O. Chernov who told him about a conversation he had had with Lenin. He showed Sokolov a number of the newspaper "Bednota" with his portrait in it.

Chernov lived in the Irkutsk province. Immediately after the introduction of the surplus-appropriation system in Siberia in 1920 he began to argue insistently that such measures did not suit Siberia. He shared his thoughts with a worker Abramov, manager of the Cheremkhovo coal mine. Abramov took Chernov to the *uyezd* party conference where the latter made a report on this subject. He stated in his speech that in Siberia it was necessary to take from the peasants not appropriations but a tax or, as Chernov called it, a "percentage deduction."

At the end of the year Chernov asked Abramov to arrange for him to go to Moscow.

And now the Siberian peasant Chernov found himself in Moscow, in Lenin's study.

This is what Chernov tells us about his meeting with Lenin.

"Vladimir Ilyich rose and came to meet me as if I were a highly important visitor. He greeted me in a friendly way and asked:

" 'Have you brought anything new from Siberia?'

"I said: 'I have put down my thoughts on paper, permit me to read them to you.'

" 'Well, read them, sit down'."

When Chernov finished reading, Lenin asked him:

"Would you agree to having your letter published in 'Pravda'?"

Chernov agreed, and his letter was printed in the newspapers "Pravda" and "Bednota."

Chernov was greatly impressed by his visit to Lenin. He wrote later: "What does Lenin's greatness lie in? It lies in the following. It is not to me that he listened, but he listened through me to the entire peasantry and through me he considered the whole complexity of the situation down below... He carried into life the will of the masses like a senior, he is the soul of the masses..."

The progressive American journalist Albert Rhys Williams, who saw Lenin and talked to him several times, tells us:

"A half-hour, an hour, an hour and a half, we sat there impatiently cooling our heels, while from the inner office came the muffled voice of his visitor steadily booming away. Who indeed was this plenipotentiary being granted this lengthy audience with Lenin? Finally, the door opened, and to the general astonishment of all in the anteroom, out of it emerged — neither officer, diplomat, or other high-placed dignitary—but a shaggy-haired *muzhik* in sheep-skin coat and bast shoes—a typical poor peasant, such as one meets by the million all over the Soviet land.

" 'I beg your pardon,' said Lenin as I entered his office. 'This was a peasant from Tambov, and I wanted to hear his ideas about electrification, collectivization and the NEP. And it was so interesting that I quite forgot the time'."

V. A. Karpinsky wrote: "When I, as editor of 'Bednota,' used to come to Vladimir Ilyich and show him letters from peasants, he would say: 'But these are genuine human documents! I shall not hear the like in any report!' He listened long and attentively to how the countryside lived and what ailed it.

" 'Well, what does our 'peasant barometer' show? Thus would our conversation begin.



Vladimir Ilyich called 'Bednota' the 'peasant barometer.'

"I particularly well remember a conversation in the winter of 1920. It was a very hard time: the end of the Civil War when sacrifices and privations of the working people reached their highest point. Agriculture fell into unheard-of decay. The peasant masses were overcome with anxiety and latent discontent. The staunchest and foremost peasants began to doubt. 'Bednota' was overloaded with letters from the countryside containing complaints and protests. In order 'to open a safety-valve' the newspaper published one of the fiercest letters with charges against Soviet power. At once letters poured in in defence of Soviet rule. A heated discussion began on the pages of the newspaper.

"I went to talk with Vladimir Ilyich. This time the conversation was a very long one. On every point Lenin literally bombarded me with questions.

"The conversation ended with Lenin demanding that I submit to him a detailed report in writing with extracts from peasants' letters. More than 50 such letters about the surplus-appropriation system and the difficulties facing the peasants were selected, studied and included in the report. And soon I had the occasion to convince myself that this summary of the peasants' letters had not been wasted.

"Listening to Lenin's report at the Tenth Congress of the party on replacing the surplus-appropriation system by a tax in kind, I felt in a number of places that Vladimir Ilyich had used the peasants' letters as material for his report.

"After that Lenin asked that the 'Bednota' editorial office send him regular reports on peasants' letters."

After summing up the data on the life of the peasants received from talks with peasants and

leading party and Soviet workers, from letters to the newspapers "Pravda," "Izvestiya," "Bednota" and from other sources, Lenin wrote a "Rough Draft of Theses Concerning the Peasants."

"1. Satisfy the wish of the non-party peasants for the substitution of a tax in kind for the surplus-appropriation system (the confiscation of surplus grain stocks).

"2. Reduce the size of this tax as compared with last year's appropriation rate.

"3. Approve the principle of making the tax commensurate with the farmer's effort, reducing the rate for those making the greater effort.

"4. Give the farmer more leeway in using his after-tax surpluses in local trade..."<sup>1)</sup>

These theses were taken as a basis for the draft resolutions of the tenth party congress on the substitution of a tax in kind for the surplus-appropriation system.

Thus, the question about the replacement of appropriation of surpluses by a tax was in principle decided. But Lenin continued to receive numerous delegations of peasants, government and party workers and talked with them in order to check his conclusions again and again. He passionately desired that the peasants who had visited him should be the first to carry information about the substitution of a tax in kind for the surplus-appropriation system and propagandize it.

On March 1, the Chairman of the Ufa Provincial Executive Committee received a telegram signed by Lenin and the People's Commissar for Food requesting him to convey to A. R. Shaposhnikov and T. G. Kondrov, peasants of the village of Beketovo of the Bulgakov *volost* in the Ufa *uyezd*, an invitation to come to Moscow to advise

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 133.

on important matters pertaining to the peasantry and peasant economy.

A few days later Lenin was informed by wire: "In reply to your telegram, peasants of the village of Beketovo, Taras Kondrov and Alexei Shaposhnikov left for Moscow on March 10."

Upon arriving in Moscow, the two peasants were received by Lenin and attended the session of the ARCEC which adopted the decision to replace the surplus-appropriation system by a tax in kind.

Before leaving Moscow, they received from Lenin special certificates one of which stated:

"The present certificate is issued to the peasant of the village of Beketovo of the Bulgakov *volost*, Ufa *uyezd* in the Ufa province, Alexei Romanovich Shaposhnikov, to testify that he was summoned by me to Moscow for conversation and advice upon an important matter pertaining to peasant economy.

By his explanations and answers citizen A. R. Shaposhnikov showed a socially conscious and honest attitude to the matter.

All Soviet authorities of the RSFSR are ordered to render citizen A. R. Shaposhnikov every possible assistance for his return to the place of his residence and peaceful labour. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars  
V. Lenin."

Upon returning to Ufa both peasants made detailed reports on their trip to Moscow at a provincial non-party peasant conference. They were listened to with great interest and attention and warmly applauded.

On March 7, at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) a commission was set up, under the chairmanship of Lenin, to work out a draft decision on the substitution of a tax in kind for the surplus-appropriation system. On

March 15, 1921, the Tenth Party Congress adopted this draft without any amendments. Replacement of the surplus-appropriation system by a tax in kind meant transition to a New Economic Policy.

The question about the substitution of a tax in kind for the appropriation of surpluses was above all a political question. "...The essence of this policy," said Lenin, "is the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, the union of the vanguard of the proletariat with the broad mass of the peasants."<sup>1</sup>)

Lenin foresaw that at the beginning free trade would cause a certain revival of capitalism in the country. But he pointed out that this danger could be overcome because Soviet power retained in its hands the key positions in the national economy (the land, factories, plants, banks, railways, foreign trade, the fleet, etc.). Lenin considered that free turnover of commodities would create economic incentives for the peasants, would raise their labour productivity and bring about an upsurge in agriculture. On this basis the restoration of state industry would be accelerated and private capital ousted. After accumulating means and resources it would be possible to build up a powerful industry—the economic basis of socialism and then to launch a decisive offensive in order to eliminate the survivals of capitalism in the country.

On March 28, 1921, the Council of People's Commissars issued a decree on the substitution of a tax in kind for the surplus-appropriation system.

The New Economic Policy ensured a firm economic and political alliance between the working class and the peasantry in the building of socialism.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 171.

## AN ECONOMIC UPSURGE

With the growth of agricultural output food supplies for the towns improved. Trade with foreign countries increased. In 1923, the Soviet Republic exported 40 million poods of grain and in 1924—240 million poods. The restoration and development of state industry proceeded rapidly, its output in 1923 being double what it had been in 1921.

The transition from the policy of War Communism to the New Economic Policy produced a slow but sure economic upswing. All this made it possible for Lenin to declare in March 1922, at the Eleventh Congress of the party: "For a year we have been retreating. On behalf of the party we must now call a halt. The purpose pursued by the retreat has been achieved. This period is drawing, or has drawn to a close. We now have a different objective, that of regrouping our forces."<sup>1</sup>) The regrouping of forces was defined by Lenin as preparation for an offensive against private capital.

Already the first results of the New Economic Policy showed that the policy of the Communist Party ensured the building of socialism on the basis of an alliance between the working class and the peasants. Lenin said at the Congress that for socialism to triumph it was necessary to strengthen the union between socialist industry and the peasant economy. He taught that this way we should begin to advance slowly but so that the whole mass would advance together and then in time the acceleration would surpass our boldest hopes.

At that time Lenin put forward two tasks: to ensure the regrouping of forces so that the socialist mode of production would triumph over

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 280.

all other economic sectors and correctly to define the moment for launching a decisive offensive against capitalist elements, mainly against the most numerous class of exploiters—the *kulaks*.

In analysing the state of the countryside in the first years of Soviet power we can state: from October 1917 to 1919 there was an increase of the number of middle peasants; then by 1922, due to the war, famine and economic dislocation, the countryside had become impoverished which resulted in a serious decline of the peasant economy, the differentiation of the peasantry being hardly perceptible, and, finally, with the introduction of the New Economic Policy a revival of economic life began.

Between 1921 and 1925 the number of middle and well-to-do peasants doubled while the number of landless peasants decreased 3.5 times. "We must not close our eyes to the fact," wrote Lenin, "that the switch from the appropriation of surpluses to the tax will mean more *kulaks* under the new system. They will appear where they could not appear before."<sup>1</sup>)

In the light of these new tasks the Twelfth Party Congress considered questions of further agrarian policy. It pointed out the need to set up a state and cooperative credit system accessible to small farmers which would be directed against the *kulaks* and would consider, in the first instance, the interests of the poorer strata of the peasantry and collective agricultural associations (artels, communes). In order to increase trade in the country and improve the position of the working masses it was proposed to consolidate all state and local direct taxes payable by the peasants in kind into a single direct agricultural tax, part of which the peasants were permitted to pay in money.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 255.

In order to restrict the capitalist elements in the countryside, the congress decided to impose the main economic burdens, and in the first instance, the burden of taxation, on the prosperous peasants—the *kulaks*, and to exempt the poorest peasants from taxes.

The congress gave a rebuff to the Trotskyites who tried to force upon the country a policy of pumping out means from the peasant economy as a "method" of developing industry.

The congress set the party organizations the task of further developing cooperation and collective forms of agriculture, and struggling against the *kulaks*.

#### A UNION OF EQUAL REPUBLICS

Lenin pointed out that Central Russia could not hold out long without the help of the outlying regions which were rich in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs. The outlying regions, in their turn, were doomed to inevitable imperialist bondage without the political, military and organizational help of more developed Central Russia. This idea of Lenin more and more captured the minds of the working people of different nationalities.

At the end of 1918 first the Ukraine and then Byelorussia declared for the necessity of establishing a close union with Central Russia. On June 1, 1919, the ARCEC adopted a resolution on the need to rally all forces for the struggle against imperialism and internal counter-revolution. Agreements were concluded between the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR and the central executive committees of the Soviet republics for the formation of a single military command and the unification of the administration of transport facilities, and postal and telegraph communications.

Lenin helped the backward nations to develop their statehood and their economy and national culture.

Representatives of all nationalities came to see Lenin in his office at the Kremlin.

Lenin taught that national policy should be based on concrete conditions. On April 14, 1921, in an address "To the Comrade Communists of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Daghestan and the Mountaineer Republic" he wrote that "their close alliance will serve as a model of national peace, unprecedented under the bourgeoisie and impossible under the capitalist system."<sup>1</sup>)

Lenin paid a great deal of attention to developing the productive forces of agriculture in the national outlying regions.

Guided by his instructions, the Federal Committee on Agrarian Problems worked out a special plan which stated: "Owing to the transition to the New Economic Policy and the particular importance of developing the productive forces in the outlying regions of the Russian Federation, it is necessary to shift the centre of gravity into the field of economic construction in the separate autonomous areas—members of the Federation... being guided by the main slogan of developing the productive forces of agriculture."

Already in the first years of Soviet power Lenin envisaged irrigation of the arid steppes and fields of the Volga regions, Transcaucasia and Central Asia and worked out special measures for land reclamation, irrigation and the development of cotton-growing. In 1918, when the young Soviet Republic was repulsing the onslaught of the interventionists and was struggling against internal counter-revolution, Lenin signed a decree on the organization of irrigation works in Turke-

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 316.



stan and the allocation of 50 million roubles for this purpose.

In 1920, the Council of People's Commissars passed a decision on measures for the improvement of cotton-growing in the Turkestan and Azerbaijan republics. This document was in the main devoted to irrigation.

In a letter to Transcaucasian Communists in 1921 Lenin wrote: "Irrigation... is especially important as a means of advancing agriculture and livestock farming... You must make immediate efforts to improve the condition of the peasants and start on extensive electrification and irrigation projects. What you need most is irrigation, for more than anything else it will revive the area and regenerate it, bury the past and make the transition to socialism more certain."<sup>1</sup>)

In 1922, during a talk with Bogdatiev, construction chief of irrigation works in Transcaucasia, Lenin tried to find out what was required to start developing the virgin lands in the Muganski Steppe between the rivers Kura and Arax.

Later the Muganski Steppe, just as other regions in Transcaucasia, became a big producer of cotton.

Lenin tirelessly pursued a consistent national policy. Considering the need for the further strengthening of friendship, cooperation and mutual help among peoples, he raised the question of unification of the Soviet republics into a single socialist state. He saw this as being a most important condition for their all-round economic and cultural development.

In December 1922, congresses of the Soviets of the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Byelorussia were held. The resolutions of

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, p. 318.

these congresses pointed to the great liberation mission of the Russian people with whose help the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Byelorussia had rid themselves of the yoke of capitalism; it was emphasized that the unification with their elder brother—the great Russian people—into a single multi-national Soviet state was the cherished dream of the people of these republics.

The Communist Party supported and directed the striving of the free peoples for unification, for the creation of a single Union of Soviet republics in the interests of building socialism and communism, developing the productive forces and organizing a reliable defence against encroachments by internal counter-revolution and international imperialism.

On December 30, 1922, at the First Congress of the Soviets of the USSR, four republics — the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Transcaucasian Federation—voluntarily united into a single state—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. With the formation of the USSR a new period began in the nation's development.

Lenin repeatedly stressed the international importance of the experience of the Bolshevik Party and Soviet power in solving the national problem and rallying the forces of the peasants of the backward peoples around the proletariat. Lenin wrote that out of the population of 1,000 million of the colonies and dependent countries, "more than 700 million (China, India, Persia, Egypt) live in countries where there are workers."<sup>1</sup>) Therefore it was to the working class, Lenin pointed out, to which the decisive role belonged in the struggle for the complete abolition of colonialism. But Lenin saw the main condition

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 23, p. 64.

for the success of the national-liberation movement in the active participation in it of the broad masses of the peasantry which made up the overwhelming majority of the population of these countries.

Lenin indicated the need, in the backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against landowners, big landed proprietorship and any manifestation or survivals of feudalism, the necessity of trying to impart to the peasant movement a highly revolutionary character, of organizing the closest possible union between the West-European communist proletariat and the revolutionary movement of the peasants in the East, in the colonies and in the backward countries in general. Lenin taught that in the struggle against imperialism and feudal relationships the Communists of the colonial and dependent countries must support bourgeois democracy, conclude with it agreements and unions, retaining at the same time the independence of the proletarian movement, expose petty-bourgeois illusions about the possibility of transition to socialism without class struggle, wage a struggle against the repainting of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movements in the colour of communism, and unite the masses under the banner of scientific communism.

Lenin recommended translating the communist movement into a language clear to every people, arousing most backward masses to revolutionary activity and merging this with the common struggle of proletarians in other countries.

In his "Notes to the Report of A. Sultan-zade on the Prospects of a Social Revolution in the East" to the Second Congress of the Comintern (published for the first time in Lenin's *Collected Works*) Lenin wrote of the position in countries in the East:

"1) Decay of the propertied exploiter classes.

"2) The greater part of the population—peasants who suffer medieval exploitation.

"3) Petty craftsmen—in industry.

"4) Conclusion: to adapt Soviet institutions and the Communist Party (its composition, its special tasks) to the level of the peasant countries of the colonial East. The essence lies in this. It is necessary to think about it and try to find concrete answers."<sup>1)</sup>

When speaking of the need to adapt Soviet institutions to conditions in Eastern countries, Lenin did not mean the Soviets in the Soviet Union, he referred to the principles of them as people's power which must be applied to countries with the prevalence of pre-capitalist relationships by means of setting up (only after driving out the imperialists and establishing people's rule) Soviets of the working people.<sup>2)</sup>

Of truly historic importance is Lenin's conclusion that after their liberation from imperialism and the establishment of people's rule, countries which had been colonial in the past, in which patriarchal, feudal and semi-feudal relationships prevail, can, with the help of the victorious proletariat of the advanced countries, accomplish the gradual transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development.

Lenin expressed the same thoughts in a talk with a delegation of the Mongolian People's Republic.

Lenin laid the foundations for all-round cooperation between the Soviet state and the Eastern countries. He exposed the expansionist policy of England, France, Germany, Italy, the USA and Japan towards the peoples of Asia, Africa

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 41, pp. 457, 167, Russ. Ed.

<sup>2)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 149.

and Latin America. He explained with maximum clarity that the October revolution meant the end of the murderous war, the end of the world imperialist system of bondage and slavery, arbitrariness and oppression, he emphasized that with the October revolution a new world was born, the world of working people liberating themselves.

The Soviet Government headed by Lenin steadily pursued a policy of friendship and cooperation with the peoples of the East. "That's true!"—Lenin wrote on the margin of a letter from G. V. Chicherin with regard to the following idea: "The novelty of our International scheme must consist in that the Negro as well as *other colonial people should take part on an equal footing* in conferences and commissions and have the right *not to allow any interference* in their internal life."<sup>1</sup>)

The activities of the communist parties of the colonial and dependent countries in the East were of great interest to Lenin; on his initiative questions of the national-liberation movement were advanced to the forefront at the congresses of the Comintern, Profintern and Communist Youth International.

"All representatives of the colonies who had been at the congresses," wrote Ho Chi Minh, "will never forget how much attention Lenin—leader and comrade—gave them, how he was able to go deep into the most complicated, purely local conditions of work. Since then each of us has had enough time to convince himself dozens of times how right he was in his opinions and how valuable his instructions were."

Lenin's able approach to problems of the national-liberation movement won a response from the most backward masses in the subjugated countries.

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 45, p. 36, Russ. Ed.

Great importance was attached by Lenin to the revolutionary movement in China. He felt it was necessary to take measures to establish close contact with the national revolutionary government in Canton led by Sun Yat-sen. He also paid great attention to the national-liberation struggle of the peoples of India. In his greetings to the Indian Revolutionary Association he called for cohesion of the working people of the countries of the East, for the common struggle against the oppressors. He wrote with indignation about the policy of "...conquest, of the shooting down of whole nationalities, of unbelievable atrocities..."<sup>1)</sup> pursued in Africa by the German, British and French imperialists and, in particular, about the fact that the Belgian bourgeoisie was robbing the 15 million-strong population of the Congo and had obtained concessions and privileges in other countries.<sup>2)</sup>

Lenin considered the awakening of Africa to be an important event; he pointed out that the African peoples reminded one of their claim to be people and not slaves. He considered it necessary to obtain the fullest information about the revolutionary movement in this part of the world.<sup>3)</sup>

From the first days after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution the Soviet Government headed by Lenin pursued a policy of friendship and cooperation with the peoples of the East who had gained independence and created their own states. It rendered support to Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey in their struggle against imperialism by concluding peace and friendship treaties with them in 1921.

Lenin believed that the Soviet state should not confine itself only to political support of

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 406.

<sup>2)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 21, p. 291.

<sup>3)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 351.

the national-liberation movement in the East but should also help the young states in developing their economy and training their own personnel.

Lenin called upon the young national states of the East and the subjugated peoples of the colonial and dependent countries to unite more closely with the socialist system, with the Soviet Republic and energetically support it. He wrote: "...One cannot at present confine oneself to a bare recognition or proclamation of the need for closer union between the working people of the various nations; a policy must be pursued that will achieve the closest alliance, with Soviet Russia, of all the national and colonial liberation movements. The form of this alliance should be determined by the degree of development of the communist movement in the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin constantly pointed out that the main thing was the creation and strengthening of a common revolutionary front of the international working class and the national-liberation movement against the common enemy—imperialism.

At an activists' meeting of the Moscow organization of the Russian Communist Party on December 6, 1920, Lenin said: "We now stand not only as representatives of the proletarians of all countries but as representatives of the oppressed peoples as well."<sup>2</sup>

Socialism can win and shall win all over the world provided the socialist system, the international revolutionary workers' movement and the movement of the peoples of Asia, Africa and

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 453.

Latin America who are struggling for independence or have already taken the road of independent development are united. Life is proving the correctness of all these conclusions. The formerly backward peoples of Russia have come to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development. The experience and practice of socialist construction in the USSR and other countries confirms Lenin's thesis that only in alliance with the working class of their own country and of the advanced countries of the world can the peasants of the colonial and dependent countries free themselves from social and national oppression and come to socialism bypassing the agonizing stage of capitalism.

#### **EVERYTHING THAT IS NECESSARY FOR BUILDING SOCIALISM**

The end of the Civil War and the transition to the New Economic Policy sharply changed the position of the cooperative system. Cooperative construction became broader, more diverse and more complex.

Lenin emphasized that a country like Russia with a vast small-peasant economy could not be brought to socialism by any other means than through cooperation (consumers' and producers').

He taught that it was necessary to bring industry and agriculture close together through cooperation and make them into one whole system that would ensure the incontestable domination of the socialist mode of production in the entire national economy.

Attention was paid, above all, to the strict observance of the principle of material incentive of the peasants in the development of collective production and the combination of their perso-



nal interests with the general interests of the state. Lenin demanded the persistent study and generalization of the practical experience of the masses, its comprehensive examination and skilful application. He wrote: "...no sensible Socialist who has ever written on the prospects of the future ever even thought, that we could immediately establish and compose the forms of organization of the new society according to some predetermined instruction and at one stroke."<sup>1</sup>)

In the course of development of cooperative construction a mutually acceptable form of social farming was found, namely the agricultural artel. Before gaining a stable place in the system of social economy, it was tested in practice.

As already stated, agricultural communes were widely spread at the first stage of collective-farm construction. In conditions of economic decline and civil war the communes had played a positive role. But with the transition to peaceful economic construction they revealed their inner weakness.

Lenin repeatedly pointed to the existence in the communes of consumers' and dependents' tendencies expressed in equitable consumption, which held back the rise of labour productivity and the development of cooperative farming. Therefore the communes could not become firmly established as the prevailing form of collective farming. Already at the end of 1921 out of 15,569 collective farms of all kinds 12,529, i.e., three-quarters, were of the type of artels and associations for the common tilling of the land.

During the first period of the New Economic Policy the organization of state farms proceeded in difficult conditions. State farms were mainly set up on former landowners' estates, which

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 410.

were to a considerable degree ruined during the Civil War; the farms lacked the necessary means for developing economic activity. In those years the state was unable to render these farms effective economic assistance or help with their management.

On the basis of these difficulties the Trotskyites, Menshevist and Socialist-Revolutionary agrarians of all kinds proposed liquidating the state farms because they were unprofitable. In a number of places workers in the land departments displayed similar sentiments.

The party carried out large-scale measures for the organizational and economic strengthening of the existing state farms and for setting up new ones. The organizer and initiator of all these measures was Lenin.

The party went Lenin's way. The state farms were given extensive rights in trade, granted extensive loans, and more agricultural machinery and implement were supplied to them. The state farms began to produce high-grade seeds and raise pedigree cattle. This enabled them to overcome their difficulties and engage in large-scale production.

The first state and collective farms blazed new trails in the socialist transformation of agriculture, in the great revolution in economic relationships and the whole way of life of the Soviet peasantry.

Lenin wrote that "the proletarian state must effect the transition to collective farming with extreme caution and only very gradually, by the force of example, without any coercion of the middle peasant."<sup>1</sup>) He taught that genuine cooperation was only possible on a voluntary basis and that only those revolutionary transformations of society could be stable and vital which were

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 157.

made with the conscious and organized participation of the masses.

In calling for strict observance of the voluntary principle, Lenin stressed that cooperation of the peasants could not be carried out by leaving things to themselves. It required constant and all-round support—financial, political and organizational—of the party and the proletarian state.

For cooperation to be successful Lenin pointed out that the peasants must be convinced by experience and in practice of the advantages of large-scale collective farming.

In determining the rates, forms and methods of cooperation account must also be taken of the national and historical peculiarities of different regions and it must be clear that the measures for the socialist transformation of agriculture were advantageous to the peasants. "It is one thing," Lenin pointed out, "to draw up fantastic plans for building socialism through all sorts of workers' associations, and quite another to learn to build socialism in practice in such a way that every small peasant could take part in it."<sup>1</sup>)

The main idea permeating Lenin's whole cooperative plan was that the Soviet Republic possessed everything necessary for building a socialist society.

"Our natural wealth," he wrote, "our manpower and the splendid impetus which the great revolution has given to the creative powers of the people are ample material to build a truly mighty and abundant Russia."<sup>2</sup>)

Lenin closely coordinated Soviet agricultural development on the way to socialism with intensive farming. He stressed that this was based

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<sup>1</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 23, p. 408.

<sup>2</sup>) V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 161.

on chemistry, irrigation, comprehensive mechanization and the wide application of the achievements of science and advanced experience.

Lenin considered that a cultural revolution would be one of the main conditions of socialist transformation of the countryside. He wrote: "...The economic object of this educational work among the peasants is to organize the latter in cooperative societies."<sup>1)</sup>

In his article "Pages from a Diary" Lenin said workers should render voluntary assistance to the countryside. The main purpose of this was for town workers to be the bearers of communist ideas to rural proletarians. Help from the towns, he wrote, must not be given haphazardly but in a planned, systematic way.

Lenin did everything in his power to solve this problem.

N. K. Krupskaya writes in her reminiscences: "Vladimir Ilyich was paralyzed already. I told him that the Americans had set themselves the task of eliminating illiteracy by 1927. They had proclaimed the slogan: 'Let every literate teach one illiterate.' Vladimir Ilyich's eyes shone: 'And we will do so by 1927, by the tenth anniversary of our revolution if the masses themselves set about it.' He wanted to write an article on this subject, then asked me to write it and wanted to add something to it... A new attack of his illness deprived him of this possibility..."<sup>2)</sup>

The process of socialist transformation of agriculture was accompanied by enormous difficulties and the fiercest class struggle. Socialist construction in the countryside involved the destruction of the last and most numerous class of exploiters—the *kulaks*. Lenin called this strug-

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 474.

<sup>2)</sup> N. Krupskaya. *Lenin's Directives in the Field of Culture*. Partizdat, 1934, p. 74.

gle the last and decisive battle with Russian capitalism. The *kulaks* tried to make use of the middle peasants, played on their fears of losing their property. By implementing Lenin's class policy, the Communist Party was able to strengthen its alliance with the middle peasants and draw them into the common struggle to build socialism.

The experience of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and in other countries of the socialist community has completely proved the correctness and vitality of Lenin's theories on the socialist transformation of agriculture.

#### FOLLOWING LENIN'S WAY

The establishment of the *kolkhoz* system, the conversion of millions of individual peasant farms into large-scale socialist enterprises is one of the greatest achievements of the Soviet people. In performing this task the Communist Party was armed with Lenin's cooperative plan which was an integral part of the programme of building socialism. This programme provided for the comprehensive development of socialist industry and, in the first instance, of heavy industry as the basis of the whole national economy including agriculture, the electrification of the country, cooperation in agriculture on socialist lines and the carrying out of a cultural revolution.

Persistent struggle was necessary for socialism to triumph. Therefore Lenin's cooperative plan required, in the first place, the strengthening by every means of the political alliance between the working class and the peasantry with the guiding role provided by the working class led by the Communist Party. "Soviet power," said Lenin, "has given us the alliance of workers and peasants. Therein lies its strength. Therein lies

the guarantee of our successes and of our ultimate victory."<sup>1)</sup>

In the beginning the peasants, striving to obtain better prices for their produce, set up agricultural sales cooperatives. Having become convinced of its advantages, they went over to cooperation of production, to joint tilling of the land. For this purpose they united their small holdings into big tracts and bought and used in common machinery, which they could not purchase alone.

The rapid development of socialist industry was of decisive importance for the victory of collectivization. The Soviet state built up automotive, agricultural machinery and mineral fertilizers industries.

The establishment of large-scale socialist farming was in the vital interests of the labouring peasants because only this could deliver them from poverty and exploitation and provide conditions for them to enjoy prosperity and the benefits of culture. Lenin more than once pointed out that the small producer would remain impoverished.

Cooperation provided the simplest and easiest way for the peasant to make the change-over to the socialist order. It made it possible for every labouring peasant to take part in the creation of the new society.

By 1927, industrial production in the Soviet Union had exceeded the pre-war level. Industry showed an increase of 18.2 per cent while agriculture, the largest and a vitally important branch of the national economy, of 41 per cent. The marketable quantity of grain amounted to only 13.3 per cent as against 26 per cent in pre-revolutionary time.

The process of splitting up peasant farms continued. During the ten years of Soviet power their

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 249.

number had grown to 25 million compared with about 16 million before the revolution. Small peasant farming was based on primitive equipment and manual labour and could not provide for even simple reproduction.

A rapid growth of socialist industry and a serious lag in agriculture—such was the situation in the economy before the Fifteenth Party Congress held in December 1927. The congress advanced as an immediate task, along with the development of socialist industrialization and a further attack on the capitalist elements, the gradual conversion of small peasant farms into large-scale socialist ones; it outlined a plan for the extension and strengthening of collective and state farms and gave clear directives on the methods of collectivization in agriculture.

This congress opened a new stage in the development of agriculture, and was itself called the congress of collectivization.

One of its resolutions—"On Work in the Countryside"—ran: "At the present time the task of unification and transformation of small individual peasant farms into large-scale collective associations must be put as the principal task of the party in the countryside." The congress explicitly stated that "this transition can take place only if the labouring peasants agree to it" and that the party "considers it urgent to launch extensive propaganda work about the necessity and advantages for the peasants of the gradual transition to large-scale social agriculture as well as to stimulate by all means in practice the already visible growing elements of large-scale collective farming in the countryside."

The state farms showed how successful large-scale farming could be. They provided great assistance to the peasant population. The state farm "Gigant" (Giant), set up in the Salsky Steppe after the Fifteenth Party Congress, was

dubbed a "grain factory." It had hundreds of tractors to plough its 60 thousand hectares of land. In 1929, it produced 3.5 million poods of grain. As well as cultivating its own fields it helped the neighbouring collective farms to sow about 40 thousand hectares.

On the eve of mass collectivization fleets of over 600 tractors were organized at 73 state farms in the Ukraine and on many state farms in the Russian Federation. As these grew and strengthened, they began to be gradually converted into machine and tractor stations (MTS). In these stations the party found and tested in practice a form of organization by the state of large-scale collective agriculture on a highly technical basis. Help from the MTS made it possible rapidly to go over from the simplest cooperative forms to the agricultural artel which allowed the fullest possible use of the potentialities of large-scale farming. The MTS played a considerable role in linking state industry with cooperative agriculture, in training farm workers and in spreading industrial methods of work to farm production. The collective farms concluded contracts with the MTS. These reflected the guiding role of the MTS in the development of all branches of collective farm production and in raising yields and productivity of livestock.

The sending of new machinery into the countryside was of great revolutionary importance. The tractors and modern farm machines, which could be used effectively only on large areas, made farm work easier and more productive. Large numbers of peasants came to the first collective and state farms to watch the tractors and machines at work, and decided on the spot to join collective farms.

In the second half of 1929 middle peasants, who by then formed the majority of the peasant population, began to join collective farms. It mar-



ked a great change in the countryside when the collective farm movement ceased to be a movement of separate groups and strata of labouring peasants and became a movement of millions upon millions of the masses of the rural population.

The beginning of 1930 was marked by a vigorous growth of collective farms. In February 1930, over 60 per cent of all peasant households had joined them.

However, side by side with these achievements, serious errors were revealed. In a number of places the rates of collectivization were artificially accelerated and often huge collective farms were set up. Frequently instead of the principal form of the *kolkhoz* movement—the agricultural artel—communes with everything—sheep, goats, pigs, poultry and dwellings communally owned—were organized.

To eliminate the extremes and errors made in the first period of collectivization, the party Central Committee on March 15, 1930, passed a resolution "On the Struggle against Distortions of the Party Line in Collective Farm Development." The Central Committee instructed all party organizations immediately to correct all errors made. Officials who could not or did not want to wage a decisive struggle against distortions of the party line were to be relieved of their posts and replaced by others.

The Central Committee resolution helped the party organizations to stop making errors and dealt a heavy blow to the enemies of Soviet power who had hoped to capitalize on these extremes and set the peasants against Soviet rule.

The year 1931 saw a further advance in the movement towards the socialist transformation of agriculture. In the main grain-producing regions, four-fifths of the peasant households united into collective farms, which, along with the state farms, became the principal producers of

grain, cotton, beetroot, sunflower seeds and other agricultural produce.

In summing up the results of the collective farm movement, the Seventeenth Party Congress, held in January-February 1934, stated that in the period of the first five-year plan agriculture had been radically reconstructed. The proletariat, led by Lenin's party, had convinced the peasants of the superiority of collective production and ensured the building of a new, collective farm system in the countryside.

The *kulaks* put up fierce resistance to collectivization. They terrorized active members of the collective farms, burned *kolkhoz* buildings, destroyed property and spread provocative rumours. Everywhere the growth of the *kolkhoz* movement was accompanied by increased struggle against *kulak* elements.

Having successfully implemented the policy of industrialization and achieved higher labour productivity, the party created the conditions for the transformation of agriculture to a socialist basis. The policy of restricting and ousting the *kulak* elements changed to a policy of liquidating the *kulaks* as a class on the basis of complete collectivization. This marked a historic change.

In 1927, the collective and state farms produced 37.8 million poods of marketable grain, in 1929—130 million poods and in 1930—460 million poods. The liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class did not mean their physical destruction. Most of them were subjected to measures of re-education through work, but those who persisted in terrorist counter-revolutionary activities against Soviet power were brought to trial and punished by law.

The party waged an irreconcilable struggle with opportunist deviations on the peasant question: the right-wing opportunists who claimed that the role of the *kulaks* and in general of capi-

talist elements in the countryside was not important, and the left-wing opportunists—as a matter of fact, Trotskyites—who, scared by the *kulaks* and capitalist elements in general, denied the possibility and advisability of alliance between the working class and the peasants.

The socialist transformation of the countryside showed how unsound were the views of the Trotskyites on the unsolvable contradictions between the working class and the mass of the peasants and shattered the assertions of the enemies of Leninism that the working class could not lead the peasants in the building of socialism.

The right-wing opportunists, who did not believe socialism could be built, opposed the development of heavy industry and denied the need for massive cooperation of production in agriculture and the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class. They distorted Lenin's cooperative plan considering it only to be a plan for the linking of town and country through "cooperative turnover." The right-wing opportunists advanced as the main task, not cooperation of production in agriculture, but the development of "cooperative commodity circulation." They proposed abolishing all restrictions on *kulak* farms. In essence this was an echo of the bourgeois reformist theories about "the peaceful growing of capitalism into socialism" and the "stability" of small peasant farms.

The party routed the anti-Marxist theories on the agrarian-peasant question and mobilized the working people to implement the policy of industrialization and collectivization of agriculture.

Questions of organization of socialist emulation in the countryside occupied an important place in the work of the party. Emulation at industrial centres and in agricultural areas became very popular. The voluntary assistance

given by factory workers to collective farms was a new form of linking town and country. The factory workers trained tractor operators and mechanics, sent teams to the countryside to repair agricultural machinery, helped to build power stations and introduce the achievements of science and advanced technology into farm production and sent people to carry out mass political, cultural and educational work.

In 1929, the party sent 25,000 leading workers—able organizers to the collective farms who rallied round them non-party activists and won the confidence and support of the whole mass of honest collective farmers.

The setting up in the countryside of large-scale socialist enterprises—collective and state farms—meant, as stated in the CPSU programme, “a far-reaching revolution in economic relations, in the entire way of life of the peasantry.” The victory of the collective-farm system radically changed the position of the labouring peasants. Collective ownership of the means of production became firmly established. As a result a petty economy, which spontaneously engenders capitalism, turned into a qualitatively different kind of economy, namely a large-scale socialist economy, and thus all channels for the restoration of capitalism were closed. A qualitatively new class—collective farm peasantry—formed in the countryside. Centuries-old distinctions between town and country were obliterated. The rural economy began to develop on a socialist basis similar to that in industry. A monolithic socialist system of national economy was built. The material and cultural level of the peasants began to approximate that of the working class.

Socialist agriculture demonstrated its strength both in the years of peaceful construction and in the years of war. The collective and state

farms provided an uninterrupted supply of food-stuffs for the front and for the home, and raw materials to industry. It is also significant that not infrequently collective farms continued to function on enemy-occupied territory, supplying the people's avengers—the partisans—with the produce they needed.

The socialist system of agriculture also proved its advantages in the difficult postwar years. All branches of agriculture were restored in a short time, gross and marketable agricultural produce increased, and the material well-being of the people improved.

In 1967, there were 36,800 collective farms and 12,773 state farms in the Soviet Union. They are powerful agricultural enterprises. On an average, collective farm unites 420 households and has over 6,000 hectares, including 3,000 hectares of arable land, 40 tractors (in terms of 15 horse-power units), over 1,000 head of horned cattle and a large number of sheep, pigs and poultry. A state farm has, on an average, 7,300 hectares of sowing area, 2,071 head of horned cattle, including 742 cows, 1,050 pigs, 4,060 sheep and goats, and 114 tractors (in terms of 15 horse-power units). A state farm employs, on an average, 650 people.

Lenin used to dream of the industry being able to provide the countryside with 100,000 tractors. At the end of 1967 Soviet collective and state farms had 1,739,000 tractors, 553,000 grain-harvesting combines, 1,054,000 lorries and several million other agricultural machines.

Almost all collective and state farms are supplied with electricity with the result that the annual consumption of electric power in the countryside has reached 29 thousand million kilowatt-hours. This figure may not seem large, but it should be recalled that in 1940, before the Great

Patriotic War, the Soviet countryside was only getting 538 million kilowatt-hours of power. Some three million electric motors are used on farms and at different auxiliary enterprises. Television sets, refrigerators, washing machines and other domestic appliances could be used in the countryside when cheap electric power became available.

Lenin pointed out that in tsarist Russia the peasants, denied education and culture, had been steeped in darkness and ignorance. Enormous changes have taken place in the years of Soviet power and the collective farm system. Now Soviet peasants are literate and increasingly using the achievements of science, technology and culture in their work and everyday life.

The pattern of everyday life shows the strengthening of socialist traits equally characteristic of town and country. In 1967, one-third of the members of collective farms had secondary or higher education. The total number of such people employed in agriculture is 745,000. Over 3,500,000 tractor drivers, combine operators, lorry drivers work on collective and state farms.

Mechanization in agriculture, better education for collective farmers and the deep socio-economic transformations in the countryside are changing farm work into a kind of industrial labour. By learning how to use scientific achievements and advanced experience, Soviet peasants improve farm management and increase the amount of agricultural produce available in the country.

And indeed, agricultural production based on the collective and state farms has increased greatly. The average annual production of grain for the period 1961-1965, compared with the pre-revolutionary years 1909-1913, increased by 80 per cent, of raw cotton—7.4 times, of sugar beet nearly sixfold, of milk—2.2 times and

meat nearly twofold. The gross annual value of agricultural production in the period 1965-1967 was on an average 75 thousand million roubles, having increased by 10 thousand million roubles, or 15 per cent, over the gross average annual value of production in the preceding three years. The output of agricultural products per head of the population during the last three years increased by 11 per cent.

The gross volume of agricultural output in the Soviet Union has almost trebled while the number of people engaged in agricultural production halved.

The basis is being laid for further development of agriculture—mechanization, electrification, the greater use of chemicals and amelioration where needed. In the five-year period 1966-1970 the sum of 41 thousand million roubles from centralized state funds and 30 thousand million roubles assigned by the collective farms are being invested in agricultural construction and in the purchase of machinery. This equals the entire amount spent on agriculture during the 19 post-war years.

The Soviet farm machinery industry produces nearly all the machinery needed for the mechanization of grain, sugar beet, potatoes, cotton and maize production. Machines are being designed that will cultivate and harvest flax, vegetables and other crops as well as for mechanizing work on livestock-breeding farms.

The use of chemicals is important in intensive agricultural production. In 1970, supplies of mineral fertilizers will reach 55 million tons (in terms of standard fertilizers) against 27 million tons in 1965 and 11.4 million tons in 1960. Agricultural workers will also have greater supplies of pesticides and weed-killers.

Lenin often wrote of the importance of irrigation in agriculture. Following his sugge-

stion, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government organized melioration of land on a national scale. In Soviet times the area under irrigation has increased from 4 million to nearly 10 million hectares.

The May (1966) plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee decided in the period 1966-1975 to increase the area under irrigation by 7-8 million hectares and to drain a further 15-16 million hectares. By 1975, the total area of meliorative lands in the country will have increased to 37-39 million hectares.

Lenin repeatedly emphasized that in intensive farming the widest use of the achievements of science and progressive experience must be practised. Soviet scientists have elaborated methods of obtaining high yields and of most effective use of land. They have developed thousands of new varieties of plants and scores of new strains of animals.

The socialist state is vitally interested in increasing the wealth of collective farms and the personal income of the farmers, in the progress of collective and state farms and in the continuous improvement of the living conditions of rural working people, just as of all Soviet people. The real income of working peasants in the Soviet Union is 8.5 times higher than in pre-revolutionary times.

The collective farms set aside special funds which they use to pay for production buildings and buildings for the provision of cultural and other amenities, for turning their villages into settlements of an urban type. The new dwelling houses have water laid on, central heating and baths. Prosperous farms provide free meals to farmers doing field work as well as free use of electricity, kindergartens and nurseries.

The distinctions between workers and peasants are diminishing not only in the sphere of relations



of production but also in distribution, culture and everyday life.

Guaranteed monthly payment for work has been introduced on collective farms in conformity with the wage levels of workers on state farms for different kinds of work and rates of output.

Guaranteed payment to collective farmers is only one way of raising their material well-being. There is also another way—that of extending social services. These include: provision of well-appointed dwellings, organization of public catering, improvement of everyday amenities, extension of the network of children's institutions, improvement of public education, holidays and medical services and construction of cultural institutions.

A system for providing pensions to collective farmers has been set up on a national scale.

The number of collective farms where the life of the peasants does not differ at all from that of townspeople increases each year. Let us take, for example, the village of Shlyakhovaya in the Bershadsky district of Vinnitsa region where the collective farm named in honour of the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU is situated. There, in recent years, whole streets of comfortable houses have been built, which in appearance, internal planning and number of rooms fully answer modern requirements.

The village has changed, and so have the people living in it. More than 20 of them are specialists in agriculture with higher and secondary education and 50 are teachers. The farm has a library with over 11,000 books. Many of the farmers have libraries of their own. The material well-being of the people and their culture are rising. On an average, every collective farmer earns 100 roubles a month. In addition, he receives benefits to the value of up to 30 per cent of his monthly earnings from the farm's special funds.

The collective farmers have personal auxiliary farms—a plot attached to the house with a vegetable garden and orchard as well as domestic animals and poultry.

Lenin's cooperative plan laid the foundation for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture in the USSR and the improved living conditions in the countryside.

### AN OBJECTIVE LAW

The success of the Soviet collective farm system demonstrated the correctness of Marxist-Leninist teaching to the effect that the socialist transformation of agriculture is an inevitable historic necessity and an economic requirement if the productive forces of society are to develop.

This Marxist-Leninist principle has been confirmed by the experience of other socialist countries. The agrarian reforms they carried out awakened the greatest enthusiasm among the peasant masses and drew them into the channel of cooperation and collectivization. When the people's revolutions were victorious cooperative associations of peasants sprang up in all the socialist countries. True, at first they were small islands uniting only the progressive, most politically conscious and poorest strata of the peasant population; nevertheless they were the first shoots of socialism in the countryside.

The experience of establishing collective farms in the USSR and other socialist countries shows that despite the fact that there are certain laws governing this process and the objective conditions may be favourable, cooperation can lead to socialism, primarily, only if the proletarian state and the industrial towns render it comprehensive and continuously increasing material,

financial, organizational and cultural help. Peasants cannot quickly master large-scale socialist production with its material and technical basis without the guidance of the working class. Only the working class has the ability to organize large-scale production, can organize labour on socialist lines and establish the new, socialist labour discipline. In guiding the establishment of collective farms, the working class passes on to the farmers its knowledge, experience and organizational skills. During the organization of large-scale socialist production and the struggle against the remnants of capitalism in the economy and in the minds of people, the working class puts the peasants in touch with large-scale production in agriculture and helps them to master it.

Secondly, the success of this complex process largely depends on whether the communist and workers' parties pursue a correct policy in the countryside, whether they carry out tireless organizational work among the peasant masses and a resolute struggle against bureaucrats and decree-makers as well as against opportunist conceptions of *laissez-faire* and spontaneity.

The communist and workers' parties in socialist countries have done considerable work in strengthening public ownership of property, organizing labour, increasing the cattle numbers and raising their productivity, in the material and technical equipment of farms and improving farming methods.

The cooperative system in agriculture in the socialist countries has already shown that it is superior to the capitalist system of farming. At present the socialist countries produce nearly half the world output of grain.

The communist and workers' parties of other countries are finding in Lenin's cooperative plan

and in the experience of socialist construction in the USSR answers to the question of how they should build socialism in the countryside. This does not mean, of course, that all the forms and methods adopted in the Soviet Union can mechanically be applied in all socialist countries. To do so would mean to renounce the main principles of Marxism-Leninism which require strict consideration of the national, historical, socio-economic and other peculiarities of each country taken separately. It should be taken into account that the process of transformation of agriculture in countries of the socialist community is taking place in a new historical situation, in new conditions differing in many respects from those that obtained in the Soviet Union.

One should not forget that the first socialist country, surrounded by hostile capitalist countries, had to rely on its own forces and derive from them powerful sources for the industrialization of the country and collectivization of agriculture. This demanded enormous privations and sacrifices on the part of the Soviet people.

The people's democracies are in a more favourable international position than was the USSR. They do not have to carry out their transformations alone but are welded together into a single fraternal alliance of many countries which render constant support and mutual assistance to one another. This enables them to solve with the least difficulties the complex problem of collectivization of agriculture.

The people's democracies also experience difficulties in the rates of socialist transformation of agriculture. As distinct from the Soviet Union, owing to historical conditions, cooperation and collectivization of peasants' farms in all socialist countries has to be carried out in conditions of preserved private property of land. It should

be emphasized that this peculiarity does not at all contradict Marxist-Leninist teaching. In his day Lenin pointed out that nationalization of all lands immediately after the socialist revolution was not obligatory for every country.

The process of socialist transformation of agriculture does not develop in the same way in all socialist countries. As well, the forms and methods of collectivization are most diverse. Therefore each socialist country, while following the sure, historically inevitable road, brings in its experience and makes its contribution to the theory and practice of socialist construction in the countryside. However all this does not exclude but, on the contrary, presupposes the existence of objective laws of cooperation of production which are common to all socialist countries. Such common objective laws include: the gradualness of transition from a petty peasant economy to large-scale socialist farming; multi-stage forms of collective economy developing from lower to higher forms; the setting up of two types of socialist farms on the basis of state property and cooperative collective farm property; organization of permanent production teams and stock-breeding farms in the cooperatives; payment according to work done, and others.

The great historical experience of all socialist countries has proved the correctness of the Marxist-Leninist thesis that collectivization of peasant farms is a long and complex process of socio-economic development, "that such tremendous changes in the lives of tens of millions of people as the transition from small individual peasant farming to collective farming, affecting as they do the most deep-going roots of the peasants' way of life and their mores, can only be accomplished by long effort, and only when ne-

cessity compels people to reshape their lives.”<sup>1)</sup> Mass collective farm construction developed in the Soviet Union in the twelfth year after the Great October Socialist Revolution, in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Rumania—in the tenth year after the revolution, and in some socialist countries has not developed yet.

Bourgeois ideologists continue their slanderous fabrications alleging, contrary to facts, that the communist parties forcibly “introduce” socialism in the countryside by means of collectivization. These people refuse to take into account that the existing socio-economic conditions prepared the ground for the development of socialism in agriculture. A profound change is taking place which finds expression in a wide irresistible movement for a new socialist life for millions of poor and middle peasants.

The communist and workers’ parties, while observing Lenin’s principle of voluntary cooperation, helped the peasant masses to realize the necessity of this historic process so that the masses themselves should become the gravediggers of the old bourgeois system and creators of the new socialist life in the countryside.

Lenin pointed out that new labour discipline did not fall from the moon and was not born of good intentions. It was forged in the very practice of socialist construction in agriculture, in the practice of strengthening the collective farm system, in the struggle against survivals of small-proprietor mentality and alien-class influence. It was natural, Lenin stated, that the establishment of new labour discipline could not take

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<sup>1)</sup> V. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 342.

place without friction, difficulties and conflicts, without the coercion of inveterate parasites and their hangers-on. Consequently, the transition of the peasants to collective farming did not decrease but, on the contrary, increased one hundredfold the care and responsibility of the party and the government for the further development and strengthening of socialist farming.

Of course, simple cooperation of the peasants' means of production also shows an advantage over small-scale unproductive farming, but it only represents the first step on the road to raising the productivity of agricultural labour. Genuine scope for the development of the productive forces is given by new mechanized production which not only facilitates the work of the peasants but also makes it possible to use the inexhaustible reserves hidden in the very nature of large-scale collective farming.

In an historically short period, the peoples of the outlying backward colonial regions of tsarist Russia, guided by the Communist Party and the working class, have covered the road from feudalism and colonial bondage to socialism. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenia now have a developed industry, intensive agriculture and high socialist culture. This experience is brilliant proof of Lenin's theory that with the support of the advanced socialist states some countries which were backward in the past can go over to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development.

The transformation of the Soviet countryside, the victory of the collective farm system and the whole road traversed by the Soviet peoples are highly valuable to the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America who have thrown off the yoke of capitalism. The peoples of these coun-

tries learn from the example of the working people of the Soviet Union how to carry out agrarian transformations and raise the level of their economy and culture.



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